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AUTHOR	Rossman, Gretchen B.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes a study that explored the relationships between efforts to improve schools, the definitions of effectiveness or success which drive those efforts, and how these are affected by the inner life, or cultures, of the schools. Three improving high schools were studied in an attempt to understand the deeply-held beliefs of the adults in the schools and how those cultures shaped definitions of effectiveness and local improvement efforts. The findings are presented as case studies of the three schools, and address three major questions: (1) What is presently known about the relationship between cultures in schools, improvement efforts, and effectiveness? (2) What is culture? and (3) What do we know about cultural change? The three cases provide data for a set of conclusions regarding cultures, change, and definitions of effectiveness which are presented and elaborated upon in the final chapter. Also included is a discussion of the ideology of improvement and effectiveness as it clashes with the comprehensive ideal of the American high school. (JD)

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PROFESSIONAL CULTURES, IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS AND EFFECTIVENESS:

FINDINGS FROM A STUDY OF THREE HIGH SCHOOLS

Gretchen B. Rossman
H. Dickson Corbett
William A. Firestone

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Field Studies Unit
Research and Evaluation Division
Research for Better Schools
444 North Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123

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INTRODUCTION

High schools all over America are under pressure to do a better job. National commissions, Time magazine, Gallup polls, and local newspapers depict barren institutions that are doing a worse job than ever of preparing students for the world of work and for the rigors of postsecondary education. High schools, these days, cannot even keep some students coming, as dropout rates climb and evidence of hidden absenteeism grows.

This report summarizes a study that set out to explore the complex relationships between efforts to improve schools, the definitions of effectiveness or success which drive those efforts, and how these affect and are affected by the inner life of schools--their cultures. To do so, we selected three high schools that were improving (see Appendix A for the details of sampling and the research methods), and tried to understand the deeply-held beliefs of the adults in the schools and how those cultures shaped definitions of effectiveness and local improvement efforts. This interest in the relationship between professional cultures and improvement efforts reflects our recurring fascination with two practical issues. First, if we want to improve schools, what should we be changing? And second, if what we should change is the cultural beliefs of teachers, administrators, and other adults, how should we go about doing that?

To address the study's overall purpose--understanding how professional cultures, improvement processes, and definitions of effectiveness are related--and to help us think about the two practical issues, we studied three high schools in depth. Using qualitative research methods, each of us spent from 30 to 50 days at one school, getting to know the people, learning about their norms, beliefs, and values, and trying to answer the question, "What is going on here?"

The findings are presented as case studies of Westtown, Monroe, and Somerville which are purposefully written to reflect the salient elements of each high school. The rationale for indepth immersion in each site was threefold. First, it would maximize the validity of the study (Guba, 1981; Dawson, 1982; Firestone & Dawson, 1981; Owens, 1982). Second, such immersion would ensure data analysis and interpretations that were empirically grounded and, hence, truthful and representative. And finally, indepth immersion would allow for the "thick description" (Geertz, 1975) so necessary for trustworthy qualitative reports.

Each of these reasons brought us farther away from a preordinate research design where analytic categories and interview questions were specified in advance; we found that writing to a common format seemed to violate the natural order of each high school's social world. The high schools in this study were struggling to become better places for teachers and students, and were engaged in processes responsive to and reflective of a complex mix of local history and demographics, past practices and "SOPs," external pressures, and the personalities and uniquenesses of the people who enter the school buildings each day. Hence, each high school's story unfolds in ways designed to let the reader come to know that particular school.

The plan of this report is as follows. Chapter One describes the conceptual framework used in the study. The conceptual framework addresses three major questions which set the relevant background for this study: (1) What is presently known about the relationship between cultures in schools, improvement efforts, and effectiveness? (2) What is culture? and (3) What do we know about cultural change?

Chapters Two, Three, and Four present the case studies. Each case focuses on different aspects of the relationships between school cultures, improvement processes, and effectiveness. In Westtown (Chapter Two) the school improvement efforts were acceptable to (and even embraced by) teachers if those efforts required new behaviors that were in agreement with their deeply-held beliefs and values about schooling. If the improvement violated an assumption or norm, then teachers felt threatened, angry and betrayed. The Westtown case study describes the teachers' deeply-held beliefs and shows how the school's improvement efforts either amplified or violated those beliefs. It suggests that professional cultures can block or enhance improvement initiatives, depending on how deeply beliefs in the area targetted for improvement are held. The teachers' cultural beliefs, then, define what is an acceptable improvement effort.

Monroe High School (Chapter Three) presents a related aspect of the relationship between school cultures, improvement processes, and effectiveness. More diverse than Westtown, Monroe teachers held differing perspectives on teaching that shaped their responses to externally mandated improvement efforts and long-term demographic changes. The Monroe case study provides evidence that improvement is possible without cultural change although how durable that change will be is questionable.

The Somerville case (Chapter Four) is a study of the role of the leader in shaping and maintaining a school culture that defines, supports, reinforces, and expresses the local definition of effectiveness.

Historically, it reveals how cultural change that draws out and emphasizes deeply held beliefs (as in Westtown) about schooling has the greatest potential for durability.

The three cases, then, provide data for a set of conclusions regarding cultures, change, and definitions of effectiveness that are presented and elaborated in Chapter Five. That chapter concludes with a discussion of the ideology of improvement and effectiveness as it clashes with the comprehensive ideal of the American high school.

CHAPTER ONE
PROFESSIONAL CULTURES, IMPROVEMENT, AND EFFECTIVENESS

Our interest in school cultures is driven by the burgeoning evidence that much of the success of highly effective schools and businesses lies in their cultures--unique sets of core values and beliefs that are widely shared throughout the organization. If cultural norms, beliefs, and values account for some portion of success then, we argued, schools that are "improving" (broadly construed) should reveal changes in cultural beliefs and values. To establish the relevant background for the study, the first section of this chapter discusses what is known about the relationship between school cultures, effectiveness, and improvement efforts. The second section spends some time detailing what we mean by culture and cultural change in general.

School Cultures and Effectiveness

Researchers have long been interested in describing the characteristics of successful or effective schools. Specifically, they have searched for those school characteristics that affect the achievement of the whole student body when the analysis controls for family background. A cadre of researchers set out to find and analyze those urban schools that were doing an exceptionally fine job of teaching children caught in the web of underachievement, low income or unemployed families, and hopelessness. From this research have come some profound and yet quite simple and ordinary (in the sense of daily) findings: schools should emphasize and reward learning; teachers should expect minimal basic skills mastery from all students; teachers should assume responsibility for teaching and for student learning; students should be regarded with respect and granted responsibility for the conduct of their lives; staff should engage in a continual process of critical self-examination and renewal; and staff should engage in certain specific practices such as using direct, immediate praise in the classroom, serving as role models, and showing concern for the physical environment of the school and the emotional well-being of the children.

Some of these elements of effective schools describe specific practices or behaviors that teachers should engage in, while other elements touch the more elusive realm of attitudes, values, and beliefs--the culture of the school. The significance of culture is seen quite clearly in the work of Rutter and his colleagues (1979) who suggest a way to synthesize the research findings on discrete practices and more implicit cultural values. They found that none of the specific practices identified in effective schools contributed to student achievement so much as the whole set of practices combined. The specific practices themselves were not as important as the way they came together to form a school ethos or culture that coalesced practices, beliefs, values, and norms into a caring community that fostered positive development and growth in the adolescents who passed through the school's doors.

This same cultural theme is quite clear in recent studies of businesses. Deal and Kennedy (1982) argue that unusually successful corporations have special cultures. Similarly, Peters and Waterman (1982) are struck by the explicit attention that excellent corporations pay to values. Their list of attributes of highly successful corporations includes developing a set of core values, valuing individual autonomy and entrepreneurship as well as organizational structures like simple forms and a lean staff.

Thus recent research on schools and businesses suggests that the most successful ones may have special characteristics. These characteristics include beliefs, practices, and organizational structures that come together to form a distinctive culture. If successful schools are characterized by cultures that display certain attributes, then schools that are improving may reveal initial strivings towards those attributes. However, school-wide change processes are complex, cultural change is fraught with difficulty, and most literature is pessimistic regarding deliberate cultural change.

Improvement Efforts in Schools

One avenue to learning if cultures in schools can be changed is to examine how existing cultures respond to improvement efforts. Past research suggests that a school's culture will affect the acceptance of new practices. Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) found that practices that were most compatible with existing values and activities were most likely to be adopted. Similarly, Berman and McLaughlin (1975) found that when innovations were implemented in schools, they were usually modified to fit local values. Cultures also can affect the use of outside knowledge. Sarason (1971) argued that the failure of the new mathematics curriculum was partly a result of culture conflict: school and university people had different expectations that led to fatal misunderstandings. Wolcott (1977) documented the same phenomenon in efforts to apply program planning and budgeting to schools. Nevertheless, despite this gloomy picture, certain cultural conditions may promote change. Although much of the planned change research has been on innovations rather than organization-wide change, some useful inferences can be drawn.

The success of change efforts in schools depends on people: central office and building-level administrative support and encouragement are crucial to successful innovations (Crandall & Loucks, 1983; Berman & McLaughlin, 1975). These key administrators set a tone that supports new practices, tolerates trial-and-error learning, and provides time and opportunities to experiment. Leaders also express values in their behaviors and can influence the development of cultural beliefs. Clark, Lotto, and Astuto (1984:54) summarize the importance of leaders and note that "this influence is often communicated through suasion and the assertion of high expectations."

Teachers also are crucial. If they believe improvement efforts will help them be more effective, teachers will support change (Fullan, 1982), but they generally require training, continuous assistance, and time to practice the new behaviors. Rosenblum and Louis (1981) found that teacher morale and collegiality promoted the successful implementation of innovations. Similarly, Little (1982) found that teacher norms of collegiality supported experimentation and continuous improvement.

Thus, the values and beliefs of school people can affect change processes by encouraging innovative behavior or participation in improvement programs. To the extent that leaders influence organization-wide cultural values, they can promote and encourage norms of collegiality and continuous improvement. Leaders can also allocate resources supportive of change processes, thereby signalling that change is valued (Corbett, Dawson, & Firestone, 1984). Teachers, in turn, may interact about professional matters, reflect and critique their own and other teachers' practice, and encourage attitudes supportive of change and improvement.

In summary, the effective schools literature and research on school change suggest the importance of cultures for both effectiveness and improvement. This focus on cultures examines the norms, values, and beliefs of administrators, teachers, students, support staff, the local community and the more distant environment. Expressed substantively and symbolically as people go about the everyday work of the school, culture is manifest as people talk in hallways, flirt, teach classes, have meetings, eat, play sports, misbehave, call parents, and make dates. The term "professional culture" breaks down into two large dimensions: purposes and relationships. The first, purposes, subsumes how people in the school define the work: what the work is, how they are to go about doing that work, with whom they do it, and how decisions about the work are justified. The second, relationships, involves how people relate to each other as they do the work or as they have unstructured time. The next section details the definitions of culture and cultural change which guided the research.

Defining Culture

A cultural perspective on organizations, although not new, has currently taken on considerable popularity (see, e.g., Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Tichy, 1983; and Schein, 1985). The fabulous success of In Search of Excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1982) suggests that the concept of culture resonates with deeply-held beliefs about what really matters in organizations, notably the subjective, the symbolic, and the normative. This perspective makes certain assumptions about social reality. One is that individuals are autonomous and engage in the simultaneous creation and interpretation of unfolding events. Organizational reality is viewed as pluralistic, subjective, and dynamic. As Brown (1978:375) describes it,

> All of us to some degree design or tailor our worlds, but we never do this from raw cloth; indeed, for the most part we get our worlds ready to wear.

The design or tailoring of our worlds, as Brown suggests, takes place within a context; reality is not constructed de novo every moment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Shott, 1979; Pfeffer, 1981). People have personal histories and biographic idiosyncracies; organizations also have histories and idiosyncracies carried in the memories of participants and interpreted to newcomers as part of their socialization to the organization (Zucker, 1977). Culture is defined, then, as participants react to, interpret, shape, and reinterpret the organization, its structures, processes, and events:

> ...people's actions and interactions are shaped by matters often beyond their control and outside their immediate present. In everyday life, actors are always the marks as well as the shills of a social order. It is in this sense that culture mediates between structural and individual realms. (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985:35)

This interplay of individual idiosyncracy and collective meaning expresses itself in patterns of norms, beliefs, and values called culture.

Various authors offer definitions of culture. For example, Woods (1983:8) views cultures as "distinctive forms of life--ways of doing things and not doing things, forms of talk and speech patterns, subjects of conversation, rules and codes of conduct and behavior, values and beliefs, arguments and understandings." These forms of life develop when people come together for specific purposes, whether intentionally or unintentionally (Woods, 1983:8). Hansen describes culture as "a tool for organizing experience" (1979:3), while Goodenough defines it as the standards for deciding what is, what can be, how one feels about it, what to do about it, and how to go about doing it (1963:259). Culture, for Van Maanen and Barley (1985), is a group's attempts to solve some set of problems over time. Culture, then, is "a living, historical product of group problem solving" (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985:33). Schein (1985:6) corroborates, defining culture as a group's "learned responses" to the problems of external survival and internal integration. Capturing the nuances of all these meanings is Wilson's (1971:90) definition which is both parsimonious and useful:

> Culture is socially shared and transmitted knowledge of what is, and what ought to be, symbolized in act and artifact.

These definitions call attention to certain important aspects of the concept. First, culture is shared knowledge. It is carried in the minds of organizational members, learned by newcomers, and amenable to change, albeit with difficulty (Kottkamp, 1984; Schein, 1985). As an essentially cognitive phenomenon, culture's ultimate locus is in the "deep" assumptions of the individual (Goodenough, 1971:20) but is expressed as a group belief in both substance and symbol. Both behavior--act--and the products of behavior--artifacts--carry cultural meaning. Behaviors and objects are not themselves culture, but rather are infused with meanings that express cultural assumptions. This emphasis on the symbolic expression of culture implies the importance of language as the most sophisticated and complex symbol system. Thus, the study of organizational cultures focuses on language: how people talk about their worlds, what they talk about and do not talk about, with whom, and where.

The above definitions of culture also draw attention to the notion that culture is both descriptive (interpretative) and prescriptive (normative). It provides knowledge (in Goodenough's term, standards) to help understand what is true--to make sense of other people's words, behaviors, and events appropriately--and knowledge to guide one's own words and behavior as to what is good--to prescribe what ought to occur in a given situation and thereby express the cultural norms governing behavior. These descriptive and prescriptive qualities underscore how culture shapes and maintains social norms, beliefs, and deeply-held values.

Defining Cultural Change

> "If cultures are human inventions, then they are changeable though not easily." (Kottkamp, 1984:153)

Culture tends to be a conservative, stabilizing force for any social system (Wilson, 1971; Hansen, 1979). Many aspects of a culture have a deep sense of obligation attached to them. People act and think in certain ways because they feel strongly that these are the right things to do and will resist changing such obligatory elements. In fact, enforcement mechanisms that are part of the culture may work against certain kinds of change.

Culture is also emergent—it grows and changes as it comes in contact with (or creates) new ideas and values. Culture is, thus, largely in process--it is both static and dynamic. When cultural beliefs are challenged, there will be conflict, dispute, disruption, or concern about the change. Participants' beliefs, values, and habitual actions may be threatened because change requires modifying their behavior in some way. As Fullan (1982:26) notes,

> ...real change, whether desired or not, whether imposed or voluntarily pursued, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty.

The status quo, or established order, is challenged when change is introduced. The knowledge of what is and what ought to be comes under dispute, and the accepted meanings of everyday behavior are called into question. This section describes processes of cultural change, how leaders or other organizational actors manage cultural change, and how subcultural groups affect change processes.

Processes of Cultural Change

Three types of cultural change processes have applicability to school settings. These are: (1) evolutionary processes, (2) additive processes, and (3) transformative processes (see Wallace, 1970:183-199, for a discussion). The first, evolution, is a steady state: new cultural elements are acquired at about the same rate that others are discarded. Over time, the culture acquires some new content but there is no radical change. As the new elements diffuse through the culture, there are areas of espousal as well as lags. The more complex the social organization, the more likely there will be pockets of differential acceptance of the new (Wallace, 1970:184).

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The second sort of process, additive change, occurs when new assumptions arise in a particular cultural domain or paradigm and precipitate changes that eventually modify an entire set of cultural beliefs or values. New assumptions reverberate through the domain and ultimately create large-scale change. For example, cultural assumptions about educating children of the urban poor and minority groups underwent changes during the 1960s and 1970s. What began as a new belief that poor children and Black children should have the same opportunities to receive an education as more affluent White children ultimately led to the infusion of billions of dollars from federal sources into the schools, elaborate and specialized bureaucracies at the federal and state levels to manage the newly-funded programs, and established new occupational categories at all levels of the education enterprise.

The third process, transformation, occurs when one individual or a group of individuals deliberately sets out to change the culture. For this process to occur, certain pre-conditions must exist: cultural meanings have become discordant and dysfunctional, the organization has experienced a series of crises, or external agencies are demanding that the schools change. Some "trigger" (Tichy, 1983) presses for change which then is usually achieved through the clear articulation of new cultural values by a leader or group of leaders.

Figure 1. Processes of Cultural Change

	change process continuum		
characteristic	evolutionary	additive	transformative
planfulness	unplanned	either unplanned or deliberate	deliberate
purpose	nonspecific	install new program or structure	change cultural assumptions
focus	diffuse	on the innovation itself	on organizational members' behaviors
role of leader	reactor; ex post facto manager	manager of innovation and consequences	primary actor and shaper of change
effects on cultural assumptions	either direct or indirect	indirect	direct

Thus, cultural change processes may be evolutionary where elements are introduced and discarded over time; they may be additive as new assumptions reverberate through a culture; and, finally, change processes may be transformative, as in the case of cultural revitalization. These processes can be conceptualized along a continuum that reflects the degree of explicit, conscious focus on cultural change (see Figure 1). Evolutionary processes are unplanned, initially diffuse, uncontrolled changes. Additive and transformative processes, however, require some attention on the part of the leader or dominant coalition to shape the change effort and channel it in desired directions. And even if an additive program does not specifically focus on cultural beliefs as desired change outcomes, there will likely be real effects there. In contrast, transformation is, by definition, change that is defined, shaped, and controlled by the leader or strong group.

Strategies for Managing Cultural Change

If the leader is significant in cultural change, how is her or his role enacted to affect that change? What are the strategies or levers available that are the most powerful? Schein (1985), Tichy (1983), Peters (1978), and Pfeffer (1981) identify strategies through which leaders define, influence, shape, and change organizational cultures. These are presented in Table 1. Although each author has his preferred list, there is convergence on three categories. Broadly, these include leader attention to desired values and deliberate role modeling; shaping organizational systems to express cultural assumptions; and interpreting the symbolic elements of organizations--the stories, myths, mottos, and symbols that both reflect and shape beliefs.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

These strategies seem to operate in one of two ways. They either create new interactional patterns in the organization or they fill the air with particular words, meanings, and phrases. For example, leader behavior provides direct evidence of what is important. By paying attention to some things and ignoring or discounting others, the leader signals what she or he wants to hear about or discuss, and thereby shapes norms and the nature of the work. Subordinates modify their behavior to conform to what the leader wants.

Organizational design systems provide leaders with opportunities to shape cultural beliefs directly and to alter traditional, habitual interaction patterns. Changing structures by altering the composition of subunits or reporting chains, by redesigning committee membership or work teams, and by flattening an organizational hierarchy can create sufficient readiness that participants' beliefs and values can be shaped. These dramatic changes help "unfreeze" the organization and create a climate of receptivity (Lewin, 1952; Schein, 1985). These changes also alter traditional patterns of interaction. People come into contact in new ways; this can change subcultural groups as well as alter those assumptions which are widely shared.

Table 1. Strategies of Cultural Change

	author			
	Schein (1985)	Tichy (1983)	Peters (1978)	Pfeffer (1981)
mechanism				
leader behavior				
paying attention, measuring controlling	x		x	x
reactions to critical events	x			
deliberate role modeling	x	x	x	
restructuring organizational systems				
decision making and planning		x	x	
appraisal and rewards	x	x		
recruitment, selection and socialization	x	x		
communication				
design and structures	x		x	x
interpreting the symbolic				
physical space	x		x	
stories, legends, myths	x	x	x	x
formal mission statements, mottos, slogans	x	x	x	x
language, jargon		x		
ritural and ceremony		x		
symbols		x	x	x

Some of these strategies may be more successful than others, given a particular organizational type. For example, large-city high school principals often have very little discretion in the faculty assigned to their schools, thus selection is not a powerful avenue for change. Although there is sometimes maneuvering that can be done, the personnel assigned to the school are relatively fixed. Promotions, rewards, awards of additional, paying responsibilities, membership in powerful cliques then become potent mechanisms for signalling who matters.

Strategies for shaping the overtly symbolic have been addressed extensively in the literature. Rituals and ceremony (Trice, Belasco, & Alutto, 1969; Pfeffer, 1981; Kottkamp, 1984; Fine, 1984; Gusfield & Michalowicz, 1984; Owens, 1985); organizational stories, sagas, myths, and legends (Ulrich, 1984; Clark, 1970; Pfeffer 1981; Fine, 1984; Boje, Fedor, & Rowland, 1982); symbols (Gusfield & Michalowicz, 1984; Peters, 1978; Deal, 1985; Ulrich, 1984; Cohen, 1979); and language and ideologies (Clark, 1970; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984; Pfeffer, 1981; Ulrich, 1984; Fine, 1984; Peters, 1978, 1980; Harrison, 1972) are all critical for defining, shaping, and maintaining cultural norms, beliefs, and values. The symbolic both reflects and shapes organizational culture, breathing meaning into symbols, mottos, and legends. And language is the common element for interpreting those meanings.

The language used in organizations expresses preferred cultural beliefs. It serves both an interpretative and reinterpretive function. When symbols, events, and behaviors occur for the first time in the organizational context, they are empty of meaning. This is an opportunity for the leader to interpret the symbols or events in valued ways. If an effort at consciously planned cultural change is underway, symbols, events, behaviors can be reinterpreted in valued directions. However, once these instrumental and symbolic messages are sent, how are they received by participants? What lends them power?

A cultural perspective assumes that participants in an organization both shape and are shaped by the prevailing definitions of social reality--the organizational culture. Realities are constructed through symbols, usually language (Gephart, 1978; Pfeffer, 1981; Manning, 1979; Pettigrew, 1979; Edelman, 1977). Language provides an information context about the organization that at once defines what reality is and shapes it. This information context is an important source of knowledge for participants in organizations (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Pfeffer, 1981; Thompson, 1977; Pfeffer & Lawler, 1980). First, it provides cues about organizational roles, socially acceptable behaviors, and acceptable reasons for those behaviors. Second, it forces attention to certain information by making that information salient (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). The organizational participant, however, is not merely a recipient or perceiver of this context; he or she actively helps to create it.

The importance of the information context may be heightened in educational institutions where technologies are unclear and events are only loosely related to outcomes (Weick, 1976; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). In these loosely-coupled systems, the construction of reality through face-to-face interaction and linguistic moves may be more important than in organizations which have clear technologies and where events related to outcomes sequentially. If this is the case, then educational organizations should engage in a high level of symbolic activity. The context of this activity--the information context--thus becomes critical in understanding the organizational culture. Preferred values and beliefs fill up the information context, defining events and beliefs, interpreting symbols, and reinterpreting the past in new ways. These efforts at reinterpretation will succeed, however, to the extent that the leader shapes and defines the instrumental and symbolic frequently and consistently (Peters, 1978).

The power of the information context lies in its capacity to normatively regulate behavior. Norms define what is appropriate and acceptable in a given social setting. The information context influences norms by emphasizing conversation about certain things and extinguishing other ideas, by underscoring a particular interpretation or reinterpretation of events, symbols, the past and implicitly ignoring alternative (and no longer valued) interpretations. The nature of groups is such that the normative regulation of behavior is a powerful influence on collective assumptions and definitions of the work and the workplace.

Distribution of Cultural Assumptions

A caution should be given that cultures are not monolithic. As largely unconscious and taken-for-granted assumptions that frame, bound, define, and shape organizational life, cultural beliefs reflect a group's history--its collective problem-solving--as it has defined the work and how rules and roles will be related to carry out the work (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985). Several processes contribute to this defining activity: differentiation, whereby different functions are assigned to different units; importation, when new structural elements are incorporated into the organization; and technological innovations which redefine the nature of a group's work. As this happens, variations in beliefs quite naturally develop within the group. Not infrequently these coalesce into the creation of subgroups or subcultures which are

> ...a subset of an organization's members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group within the organization, share a set of problems commonly defined to be problems of all, and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings unique to the group. (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985:38)

Subcultures connote cultural diversity and the possibility of conflict, as subgroups define and redefine their own work as most central to the organization's mission. This makes change attempts more complex; it increases the probability that new definitions of what is and ought to be will disrupt well-entrenched patterns of working and viewing the world. Nevertheless, there certainly can be degrees of overlap between subcultural groups. The greater the overlap, the more a unitary culture is conceptually possible:

> [O]rganizational culture is therefore understood as a shadowlike entity carried by subcultures and defined as the intersection of subcultural interpretive systems. From this perspective, organizational culture is a rendering across subcultures of what is common among them. (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985:38)

As our study traced the distribution of beliefs in and adherence to some set of cultural values, the identification of variation in norms, beliefs, and values within schools became important for understanding the interaction of improvement efforts with school cultures. This complex interplay of school cultures and improvement processes is developed next through the stories of three high schools. First is Westtown where anger and hurt prevailed as deeply-held definitions of teaching and of how administrators and teachers should relate were challenged and pressured to change. Second is Monroe, a school with a faculty ethos out-of-place in its community and where teachers felt caught between students and administrators because of planned change initiatives. Finally comes Somerville, a school that underwent transformative change a few years ago under the leadership of a charismatic principal who shaped and now maintains a distinctive school culture. The high school stories are followed by a chapter of conclusions regarding culture and improvement processes and a revisit to the concept of effectiveness. These conclusions pull together the ideas developed here by relying on examples from the stories. Now, to the high schools.

CHAPTER TWO
WESTTOWN: IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS IN A GOOD SCHOOL

> "This is a whole push toward academic excellence." [87][1]
>
> "We have good teachers. They're doing it. They hate it. But if we can get through the tension in this transformation, we will have a great school." [1]

Change is difficult. Whether it involves reordering social relationships in a society or improving instructional practices in a school, the alteration of behavior is typically accompanied by questioning and concern. This is no less the case in good schools trying to become better than in mediocre schools trying to become good.

By all accounts Westtown was a "good" school--whether from the perspective of its staff, the community, educators in the region, or formal accrediting agencies. Yet this medium sized suburban school (just over 1,000 students in grades 7-12) had not escaped completely the problems attendant with a changing student population (in terms of numbers and academic ambition) and slowly eroding standardized test scores. The consequence was a systematic administrative push to improve academic excellence, benchmarked by the arrival of a new principal. In the process, staff found themselves facing multiple changes affecting the curriculum, teaching practices, accountability, and discipline.

Teachers reacted differently to the various initiatives. Curriculum and instruction-related changes, on the whole, won wide acceptance. Accountability changes generated more complaints but received a grudging compliance nevertheless. On the other hand, the discipline efforts sparked hostility and more than occasional refusal to comply. Examining the differences in response reveals much about the school's culture, not only the component norms, beliefs, and values concerning what appropriate definitions of a good school were but also about the intensity with which these cultural elements were held.

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[1] Interview respondents in each site were numbered sequentially. The number in brackets refers to a specific person.

The Faculty Talks about the School

> "It's pretty much like the New Deal...When they're changing things too much, you get the feeling they don't know what they're doing." [6]
>
> "I have some inkling of a belief that people are not seeing where leadership is taking us." [10]
>
> "What teachers desperately need is to know that someone out there knows what they're doing. [11]
>
> "No one knows where we're going. People say we're just changing to change." [27]
>
> "The faculty doesn't feel like it's going anywhere...It stems from the changes. They don't see what we have accomplished." [33]
>
> "Kids don't know where we're going. All the changes in rules and regulations, they don't know what they are. The teachers are in the same situation. You don't know where you stand; whether you make the right decision, whether rules will be adhered to, or whether your program is viewed positively." [34]
>
> "There has been a series of changes; so it can be confusing." [46]
>
> "The school is in a state of stress...so many changes and alterations to the changes. That's difficult to cope with in any setting." [55]
>
> "I'm not sure what the rules are. Instead of there being an accepted pattern, people aren't sure." [69]

An unsettled feeling drifted through the faculty. Teachers shared a sense that they did not know "what is" in the school. Immersed in a changing situation, they had no fixed point by which to assess direction. To invoke an image, the faculty's tone recalled Benjamin Franklin's observation at the conclusion of the constitutional convention that until that point he had been unable to determine whether the sun on the back of Washington's chair was rising or setting, but now--considering the quality of the group's work--he believed the sun to be rising. Time had not yet made the resolution of events at Westtown clear to the teachers, although those that hazarded a prediction suggested a setting sun.

> "It appears to be changing for the sake of changing. When I came to the school, some instructional change was taking place; [but] you could cite the reason for it. It was obvious. It seems like [now] we're in a roll with no end in sight." [5]
>
> "On paper, everything changes; nothing ever changes really." [79]
>
> "There is constant change and constant interference and not for the better. People are not petty; they are willing to change for the better." [8]
>
> "The changes haven't all been for the better. Sure, every school needs to improve, but sometimes [the change] is so drastic that it affects everybody. You hear so much complaining. It's a morale factor, like a disease." [15]
>
> "The big thing I've gotten is that things are not going in a positive direction." [18]
>
> "This was a nice place." [23]
>
> "I don't know if it ever peaked or just stayed on an even plane, but in the last three years, it's gone down." [28]
>
> "What we're afraid of is that the school will soon lose that [good] reputation." [35-]
>
> "Results aren't showing us to be better. There's only more confusion." [44]
>
> "We went from the top of the hill to this giant mudslide...At Best we're staying even. The school is going around in circles." [47]
>
> "I see too many changes and the staff's morale going down." [58]
>
> "It's a shame. Test scores are surface [improvement]. Before, we were good underneath the surface. I would like to see a follow-up survey of kids and see how well they have coped." [37]
>
> "I've never seen such antagonism." [70]

Uncertainty and despair for the future had several precipitates. Three of these teachers were leaving the school or wanting to do so, mental and physical health problems, and increasing apathy. By the beginning of the

1985-86 school year, actual turnover was less than statements made the previous spring would have indicated would be the case. Only two teachers actually left voluntarily. Although one of these had said a lateral move was as attractive as an upward one, the new position was in fact a step up. On the other hand, all of the people seeking employment elsewhere were veteran teachers with relatively high salaries. The folklore--and probably the fact--is that school districts do not readily hire people they will have to pay highly, and this may have inhibited the veterans from leaving. Regardless, as they talked, substantial anguish accompanied staff members' consideration of even changing jobs. And the rumors of people leaving exacerbated a sense of potentially dramatic turnover.

> "I want to get into something where I'm not beaten down." [67]
>
> "I applied to [another district]. I took it as a compliment that I got to the final interview round. But I figured they'd not want to pay my salary." [10]
>
> "Five years ago I would have said I'm delighted to be staying. Now, the answer is unfortunately yes. I have applied other places. I don't want to be this disgruntled for ten [more] years." [15]
>
> "You hear all the time that somebody's leaving. You don't know who." [16]
>
> "Something in me is saying I can stick it out. My mind says I can stick it out." [26]
>
> "I would prefer to leave now." [19]
>
> "I've considered getting out." [29]
>
> "The majority of staff would have left last spring, laterally. [But] too many have no place to go; they are too high up the ladders. So they will turn their heads, walk into the room, and do what they have to do to get by. I'm almost in that category. I'm looking." [47]
>
> "I'm thinking of early retirement. I hadn't thought about it until this year. Sometimes I wish I had done something else with my life." [52]
>
> "I have an interview on Thursday." [28]

> "The situation is pushing some people into speeding up their search, expediting it. If I could get social security, I'd retire." [34]

The teachers who were considering leaving were not just concentrated among the oldest staff. Although six of the above had more than 20 years experience in the school, teachers who wanted to leave included those who had been in Westtown longer and shorter than the average (12.4 years for the 71 from whom information on their years in the school was available). Moreover, the teachers talking about leaving and the ones who left were not impossibly intractable or deadwood in the eyes of their colleagues. Indeed, one of the major fears, real or imagined, turnover produced was that good people would continue to leave, robbing the school of its heart.

> "My fear is that the changes would make us lose good people. We have lost some but they were close to retirement anyway." [19]
>
> "People are afraid that people will get disgusted and leave." [20]
>
> "I'm concerned, and the people they bring in may not be as good as the ones that leave." [26]
>
> "It's taken a lot of the spirit out of the good ones." [54]

Health problems, too, emerged. A few staff members claimed physical ailments; even more described a decline in what could be labeled mental health, assuming that a major component of such health was having positive, constructive thoughts about one's work place.

> "I've never despised coming to work. In the last month, I'm thinking about it." [7]
>
> "The attitude is changing. Before I couldn't wait to get up and come." [11]
>
> "We have a lot of unhappy people in school. You hear so much complaining. It's a morale factor, like a disease...It used to be nice here." [15]
>
> "This is my worst year in education other than the first..I have a friend [on the faculty] who can't sleep on Sundays." [52]

> "There is a lot of unrest and unhappiness." [86]

> "I see a lot of unhappy people." [3]

> "I used to thoroughly enjoy coming here." [29]

> "The last three to five years I felt it. Before that, I never went home and complained." [30]

> "When I leave here, I don't want to think about the place." [33]

> "Teachers are weary and disgruntled. It's depressing." [36]

> "I used to love getting up to come here. Now I'm looking to change, even laterally." [37]

> "I'm being treated for anxiety." [26]

> "At one point last year, I was throwing up every morning before I came." [21]

> "Several teachers are on valium, pressure-relieving drugs. Maybe I should be too." [28]

> "Teachers are dissatisfied, frustrated, misunderstood, and short-changed." [41]

Staff offered the above comments with a not insignificant amount of emotion. But what follows came with the most noticeable accompaniment of shrugs, grimaces, and wistful stares. For teachers the tell-tale signs sine qua non of what they perceived to be the deterioration of the school were apathy and withdrawal.

> "A number of people have fled, retired early, or come in when they are supposed to, do competent jobs and go on." [5]

> "People loved to teach here. Now they're saying I'll just put in my time." [8]

> "It's a tough atmosphere to work in...I hope people don't get so down so they just come in, teach, and leave." [12]

> "I'm seeing some people let some things go." [53]

> "There a lot of good teachers who have just given up...It's rotting from within...It's a crime...A lot of teachers are playing out their string." [22]

> "Since then, people said to hell with it. I'll just go in to my room and close the door. I'm going solo, do my thing." [16]

Teachers noticed that their colleagues were not going out of their way to participate in the extra-curricular life of the school as well.

> "I used to be very involved in things. Now I still coach, but that's all. It used to be you didn't have to beg people to come chaperone. Now it comes to Friday and you have to be. It didn't used to be that way. People used to volunteer. People are tired of not getting anything back for it." [20]

> "We have a faculty that would go above and beyond. People would do these things without thinking about it. Now they do things as if it were personally a burden." [58]

> "Look into absenteeism, people are giving up activities." [23]

> "So teachers are saying, I will do the job in the classroom. But it doesn't make for the kind of school we want. People volunteered to do jobs; now they don't want any of them--chaperones, advisors. It's not a matter of not wanting to deal with kids but everything else has shut them down." [35]

Frustration and sadness were evident in the comments. Three spoke for the majority of the faculty:

> "With the changes coming on, you can almost see why people become deadwood." [29]

> "In the long run, kids will suffer. We'll just turn into average teachers. I'll leave before I do that." [37]

> "It's so much different. We still laugh but it's not a laugh of humor; it's a laugh of sadness. Like in the service, when all hell was breaking loose." [6]

Teachers' comments about Westtown are dramatic and even poignant. Their number also indicates the extent of their feelings. Of the 84 teachers interviewed, the comments of 40 are represented in the above quotes; at least 26 others echoed similar personal concerns about school direction and staff attitudes. Indeed, perhaps most telling is that out of the teachers interviewed, only seven or eight indicated that they still looked forward to arriving at the school each day.

Perhaps teachers everywhere in any school would reflect this degree of disgruntlement with their work life. A Harris survey indicates that 27 percent of teachers nationwide are ready to leave their jobs (Kanengisor, 1985). It is doubtful however that teachers everywhere could, almost in the same breath, make the following statements about their schools, colleagues, or programs.

> "The amount of learning going on this school is tremendous." [78]
>
> "The quality that comes out [of this program], you could put it up with any school." [40]
>
> "It's a good school statewide." [60]
>
> "Academically, it's a fine school." [71]
>
> "I think it's a great place." [44]
>
> "The school used to be a very well-respected school. We have that tradition [that keeps people going]. I teach for the kids." [22]
>
> "This a good school. I love it. I fight for it tooth and nail." [26]
>
> "I still have pride in [the school]. We know how great we were." [47]
>
> "I came here because I was so impressed with it." [58]
>
> "We always felt confident in the classroom. The staff built this reputation. We've worked hard for it. It was built up on consistency and discipline." [37]

Staff believe that much of what is good about the school is attributable to the quality of the teachers and how they approach their work.

> "The good news is that the faculty is marvelous--giving, concerned, wonderful to work with. That's what made this school great." [11]
>
> "I found the faculty to be very cooperative. I enjoy talking to them in informal situations. The faculty is warm, good to me, very helpful. I've gotten cooperation on the times I ask about materials, just to get ideas." [18]
>
> "I am amazed at the [positive] feeling among the faculty. It has been present the whole time. If anything, maybe we've gotten a little closer." [74]
>
> "There are no better people to work for." [82]

> "This is an unusual faculty. The main core is an unusually good group of people. We know we have this reputation. As a homeowner, I can see it in terms of property values. People moved in. Now I see people moving out because of the school. What is carrying the faculty, they still have pride. They don't want to see this bad reputation. Maybe subconsciously they're fighting." [16]

> "We're a real friendly group. When I came, people couldn't do enough to help me...even the subs say they get more help here than anyplace else." [23]

> "Through sincerity, perserverance, know-how, enthusiasm--we're cultivating a sense of unity and purpose in the other [department] members. We have excellent rapport. Each recognizes the others' skills and professionalism." [25]

> "The finest group of teachers I've ever known. I marvel at them." [26]

> "The faculty and administration are very warm, very helpful. If they saw other schools, they would realize this is a good place." [51]

> "Our department is one of the outstanding [in the area]--very professional." [29]

> "Our program is excellent. Why? Basically we're a bunch that wants to do a good job. They're workers. We make our system work. We disagree violently on many things; but in the long run, we're working for the same thing." [34]

> "The only reason our department is successful is the dedicated staff." [42]

> "We are close knit. We protect one another. If one person is affected, we are all affected. We are forerunners." [49]

> "A number of people have been here a long time; they prided themselves on the quality of the program. They've always been trend-setters." [54]

These data portray an almost schizophrenic faculty. They present themselves as a faculty in turmoil, questioning the school's direction and effectiveness; and yet they claim devotion to one another and to seeing to it that students learn.

Cultural Perspective I

Erving Goffman (e.g., 1959 and 1961) generated a plethora of the most insightful comments on social life by simply entering a setting and asking the question, "What's going on here?" The statements of Westtown teachers raise this same question. On the one hand, a torrent of dissatisfaction, disgruntlement, and dismay about the state of the school poured out. On the other hand, staff evidenced an incredible amount of pride in their school, respect for their peers, and creativity in the classroom. The two images did not fit with one another. Yet they were part and parcel of the same school. Why? What was going on there?

As mentioned in Chapter One, Rutter et al. (1979) argue that what sets a good school apart from mediocre schools is its ethos. A somewhat elusive term, ethos refers to the tone of the school, the "feel" one gets from being in it, or--using a more overworked word--its climate. What Rutter et al. mean is that there is a shared view of what the school is about and how people should behave to ensure that this view materializes and is maintained. In other words, good schools have common ideas about what is and what ought to be, to recall Wilson's (1971) definition of culture.

It matters, of course, what the content of these shared definitions are. A school is more likely to be a good one if staff share a strong commitment to enabling all students to learn than an expectation that no one should stay in the building beyond student dismissal. The introduction to this chapter clearly reveals a commitment among the Westtown teachers to providing the best instruction they could for all students. What made the trend toward apathy and withdrawal so appalling was that it, more than any other phenomenon, potentially threatened to weaken this commitment the most.

But the term, "shared," also has to be explored. For the success of a change effort, it is as important to understand how widely norms are shared--the uniformity of the culture--as it is to understand the content of the norms. In developing a typology of cultural systems, Williams (1970) emphasizes their normative structure. About norms, Wilson (1971:71) says, "In support of their values (conceptions of the good) men develop rules of conduct. Such rules, stipulating behavior commonly expected in a given role, are norms. Fixed in custom and convention, the norms of everyday life are less articulated in the mind than rooted in the heart." According to Williams (1970), two key components of a culture's normative structure are the distribution of knowledge about norms and the extent of conformity to them. Thus, a more precise way to talk about a shared view is to say that most staff know what the important expectations for behavior are, recognize to whom the expectations apply, and adhere faithfully to the expectations.

For these conditions to occur, there have to be means for communicating the expectations, reinforcing them, enforcing them, and seeing them carried out. In William's analysis, the other two components of a culture's structure are the transmission and enforcement of behavioral expectations. To refer to a shared commitment then should conjure up an image of the considerable amount of discussion, observation, praise, and admonishment that lurks behind a school's ethos. Additionally, and importantly, schools may have not only well-defined expectations for professional and student behavior but also well-established patterns of rules, roles, and relationships for supporting them.

Schools with uniform cultural systems, i.e., widely distributed and adhered to expectations for what is and ought to be, face a serious problem with change attempts. Because well-established patterns of behavior are already in place, a proposed change or change process that violates these patterns generates considerable resistance and turmoil.

To an extent, this prediction of resistance to change belies the image of good schools being open to and making use of new knowledge of what constitutes good practice. But the two statements are not contradictory. The system's norms define where change is legitimate; and in these areas, such as the improvement of practice, change is welcomed and risk taking rewarded. Changes that challenge a foundation to the system--such as the commitment to all students' learning or the relationships felt necessary to pursuing that objective successfully--place it under attack. The moorings become dislodged, the anchors start to slip, and as a result uncertainty and anxiety emerge.

The following sections argue that this is what happened at Westtown.

Westtown's Ethos

The tenets of the high school's professional ethos evolved slowly. Earmarked by remarkable stability during the 1970's in terms of low teacher and administrator turnover, the school offered a fertile environment for a strong normative system to take root. This is exactly what happened. Facing few external challenges, staff were able to focus almost exclusively on the business of teaching students. Benefitting from frequent interaction with one another and insulation from other influences, the staff developed strong commitments to how this work should be conducted. Three interrelated sets of expectations formed the foundation of this system, with the second and third deriving from the first.

The Classroom is the Capitol

One administrator's formula for making a school good was straight forward, "You get good people, let them go and keep them happy." [3-80,83] Teachers adamantly agreed. Their job was to teach students, plain and simple. However, they did not reject input as to how that job could be done better nor did they seek to work in isolation from their colleagues. To the contrary, supervision was usually welcomed and staff demonstrated a resoluteness in updating curriculum offerings. Indeed, in recent years, at least five departments undertook revisions affecting all teachers while another four adjusted course offerings. Of course, one might accuse the faculty of just going with the times, and there is a delicate balance between trying to be relevant and appearing to be trendy. Nevertheless, a sincere willingness to take risks in order to improve instruction lay behind the actions.

> "Curriculum changes I don't mind. I've always used my own method. Now I'm incorporating more department stuff. I don't like it, but I see the positive. It gets you out, maybe you were in a rut. It stimulates you." [7]
>
> "We've changed around the curriculum. It hasn't been all that upsetting. It sort of brought order to a situation that was upsetting. Back in the 60's, it was do your own thing, ended up with 35-36 different courses. You name it, we had it. Now, it's more structured, and just what we needed. [4]
>
> "When I first came, we had a nice program, a well-structured combination of electives and required courses. Two years later we got the idea of the grab-bag thing. The students could take any course. It was a time of the fads. It seems like we're getting it back. There was constant realigning, constant new this, that and the other. Now there is more continuity and stability---except now we have to revise the syllabus and develop an overview [of a new course]. [6]
>
> "I'm excited about what we're going to work on. We could be the first in the state to do it. That's kind of neat. A lot of it is due to the faculty that's here." [53]
>
> "In eight years, my department has gone through two revisions and three systems. It's a lot of work. I like the system we have now." [70]

> "Every school needs to improve." [15]

> "[A teacher] and I have been working together, seeing why there was a difference [in results of classroom activities]. If I do something that went well, I tell [the other teacher]." [31]

The result was that the faculty took jovious pride in the products of their efforts. Adding to the comments presented at the end of the first section of this chapter were two more teachers:

> "We have the best equipment [in this region]. Our program is a cadillac; I'm very proud of it." [27]

> "I think our program is excellent." [34]

But the driving force behind the teachers' curriculum improvement activities seemed to be to provide the very best instruction they could in the classroom. The following five comments reflect an attitude not only expressed throughout the interviews but also evidenced in actual teaching.

> "I teach for the kids." [22]

> "What holds a marriage together is commitment. That commitment to be professional or serve children should hold a school. If held, despite the undertones, then it would be a compliment to the faculty." [10]

> "I'm here to do a job. I don't let the outside affect me. I close it out."

> "We focus on what will work in the classroom...The rules here don't introude on this." [84]

> "I want to promote the positive, to give kids something more that they can hold on to in the rest of their lives." [51]

> "I do more than required in my classroom." [52]

> " So many of the teachers respect education so much they will do whatever it takes to keep it going." [54]

> "You want to make sure you do your job so the next teacher can do their's." [77]

Essentially this tenet of the cultural system specified that classroom decisions would be made on the basis of what was likely to insure the best instruction possible and not because of political or demographic considerations. Who made the decisions seemed less important than the criteria upon which the decision was based. Teaching to tests, caving in to parental demands, or lowering standards to help a less able student body succeed then were anathema, as will be seen. A teacher summarized this best: "There was a time when the classroom was the capitol; the administration existed to serve the teacher performing in an excellent manner--everything was done with learning as the ultimate goal." [25] Thus, the classroom as the capitol evoked the idea that the classroom was the focal point of school life, the location of the most revered activities.

Discipline Should be Consistent

If one counted the words that occurred most frequently in teacher comments about how to treat students or teachers, "consistent"--closely followed by "follow through," "backed up," or "supported"--would have been at the top of the list. Of the 84 teachers interviewed, 56 used these very words. Should a discipline problem emerge, teachers wanted the student to be dealt with quickly and fairly, with the same criteria for making a judgment applied in every case. For them, this made the school world predictable; the consequences of an action were known by all even before the action was committed. And as importantly, teachers' authority in the classroom was reinforced.

> "Make a rule and stick to it." [16]
>
> "We have policy; it's only as good as it is enforced." [29]
>
> "Discipline, when it's made up, applies to everyone. That's how I function as a teacher and have never had a problem with it." [30]
>
> "The plane leaves at 2:05. If you are not there, the plane leaves." [32]

> "You have to have a consistency in administering policies, to both faculty and students. [Otherwise] the faculty becomes aware if they don't do anything, no one will came down on them either, like the kids." [35]

> "I have no gripe with policies, if they are administered fairly." [37]

> "My philosophy is firm, fair, and consistent. Although I probably have the loosest atmosphere, at the same time they know what's expected. If they step out of line, they know they'll pay the price." [47]

> "If you make a rule, follow it through." [60]

> "It's not a question of what rules there are but how you handle them." [53]

> "Enforcement is the issue more than the policy. Why have policy you don't enforce? Consistency is the thing." [41]

Teachers felt that a serious problem resulted if rules were not enforced consistently. And that was that students--and teachers--would no longer respond positively to the exercise of authority and thus behave as disruptively as they wished.

> "If you are going to have a rule, stick to it. With a lack of consistency, we lose our ability to be the authority." [8]

> "I got used to a set of rules, followed to a 'T.' It made for a well-run school. Kids have even said to me 'see what happens when students are not punished'...when you send a kid down for discipline and nothing happens, you feel like a jerk." [23]

> "When you run into a problem, you want something done about it right away. If the kid goes down and is told 'don't do that it's not nice,' it breeds a lack of respect. They feel they can get away with it even when sent down to the office." [38]

Teachers also valued consistent discipline because they believed that it enabled them to devote all of their class time to instruction. Disruptive behavior was seen as another interference that took away from that time. One teacher summed up the felling this way: "The faculty is concerned about discipline problems outside the classrooms and afraid that they will get into the class." [69]

However, they did not value passive students. Boisterous, enthusiastic, energetic, and even somewhat unruly behavior was tolerated and even desired by a majority of the faculty _if_ that behavior was directed toward learning. One teacher in fact severely reprimanded the students one day for not being lively enough when a researcher was present in the class. The students explained they were afraid they would make the teacher look bad in front of an outsider, fearing the person would mistake their eager involvement in the discussion for a teacher's lack of control. At least five other teachers made a similar comment when their classes were observed, and at the same time bemoaned that the outsider had not seen the kids at their "best." As one teacher said, "You have to realize it's an artificial situation; the kids want to look good and make the teacher look good." [8]

Teachers, then, desired active participants in the classroom process. When students skipped out of line, swift and predictable but not necessarily harsh retribution was expected and demanded in order to reserve their classrooms for instruction.

The Principal Buffers the School from Outside

People often learn about themselves in retrospect. Or as the aphorism goes, "You don't know what you've got until you lose it." Had the teachers been asked in 1980 what kind of administrative behavior they valued they would have immediately discussed what a disciplinarian should do. If pushed to define desirable principal behaviors, the teachers would in all probability have been at a loss. To hear them talk, they had no idea what the principal in office at that time did. The principal was rarely seen in the halls, much less observed carrying out the duties of the office. Indeed, at the person's retirement roast in 1982, a teacher stood up, introduced himself as a sophomore in the high school, and asked "Who is Mr. ____?" However, they subsequently began to value the activities that apparently went on behind the scenes.

> "In the past, we never heard three-fourths of the silliness. I never realized it until the change. We were shielded. It's not being done now. We're no longer shielded from this kook or that kook." [8]
>
> "With the other principal, we never saw [the person]. As it turns out, [the person] was doing a fantastic job of buffering the faculty. But there was no real leadership." [16]
>
> "[The principal] stayed to himself. But things got done. People didn't realize it until he left." [32]
>
> "[The principal] kept a low profile but I didn't realize how good a job he did. He was a buffer between us and [the outside world]." [35]
>
> "The previous administration acted like a sponge. If we didn't need to know something, we didn't [learn about it]. A school needs a buffer." [47]
>
> "I always thought of an administrator as a mediator between the board and the teachers." [52]

Once again, it seems what teachers were really saying is that they wanted to be left to do their job. They did not recognize that administrative behavior played a part in maintaining the classroom as their province--other than to handle disruptive students--until the school and the community began to change.

Change at Westtown

It is not quite accurate to say that all of the changes teachers perceived that they confronted were initiated with the arrival of a new principal. Curriculum change or revision was almost routine as teachers in various departments sought to update, increase the relevance of, or fine tune their offerings. Additionally, and more importantly, if the majority of teachers were accurate in their assessment, the student body changed over time. Fewer college-bound and academically oriented students dotted the classrooms; instead, according to teachers, a more apathetic, "me-oriented" clientele became prevalent. The following comments echo the thoughts of at least 29 faculty members.

> "Before, the attitude of kids was much better...kids are more complacent; it's harder to motivate them." [7]
>
> "Kids don't have the same attitude." [13]
>
> "I still feel the personality of the students has changed. It gnaws at people. It was happening before [the new principal] got here." [16]
>
> "Are we different? Are we getting a lower quality kid? I'm not any easier. But kids don't care as much." [23]
>
> "I've got a second period class. The kids are real nice, polite, courteous, and respectful; but they are not motivated." [28]
>
> "Before, young people adhered to rules and regulations. Now they question them. Standards I've used for years, I've had to alter them. Students are more blase." [27]
>
> "Children today are a much more me-oriented group. I don't get the dedication. Very few kids are concerned about what you think. I'm seeing it much more. It's not all kids." [33]
>
> "Kids are not the same. You have a minority that is decent." [36]
>
> "Today there is a complete reversal. Materials are never taken home. Everything is too much trouble. The say, 'You entertain me.'" [42]

There were only six clearly dissenting opinions. As three said,

> "Kids are kids. They have to be taught decision-making skills. Some people around find it convenient as an excuse. I don't change my classroom standards. I don't feel I have to change." [37]
>
> "You spell out what is expected. If kids know expectations, and they are carried out, [everything is fine]. We're not here to win friends; we're here to teach." [30]

> "I set my goals and stay after them. It's hard work, [but] kids did the same things they do now. I want them to learn to be responsible." [24]

The point is that a potential challenge to the faculty's view of the school and how it should operate was already appearing on the scene. In this case, it coincided with an administrative change, one that from all indications was expected by the superintendent to instigate a number of improvement efforts. Faculty reactions to these changes illustrate the interplay between a professional culture and innovations. At Westtown, the reaction varied with the extent to which the change was congruent with the norm of the classroom as the capitol. Three of the changes over the last three years in particular are informative. (Other changes were made, including moving all special education students into regular classes, but these received less comment from teachers.)

Madeline Hunter

The Madeline Hunter approach to instruction is probably the most used instructional innovation in the country at the moment. Its appeal resides largely in its fit with common sense, but research seems to be bearing out the enthusiasm (Stallings, 1985). In any case, it was readily accepted by one of the administrators at the high school. Convincing the superintendent of the worthiness of the program, the administrator and a cadre of other staff members attended training sessions. The sessions proved disappointing, but the administrator essentially went through the materials individually and developed a series of workshops to be given to the entire faculty over the course of a fall. The workshops were taught by that person, who intentionally and conscientiously modeled the desired behaviors while instructing the staff.

Teachers were then to try out the ideas in their classrooms voluntarily for the remainder of the year, receiving commendations from administrators on evaluations if they were observed to be attempting some of the suggested practices. The following year evaluations would formally be based on adherence to the Hunter program.

Teacher reactions varied from neutral to extremely positive, with the majority being on the positive end. There were no discernable negative reactions.

> "Two trains of thought on Madeline Hunter: Some thought it was a waste of time, but for most, it was a rejuvenating experience. We were doing those things anyway but lost sight of the reason why." [8]
>
> "I have been using Madeline Hunter to the best I can. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. I try to use anticipatory set always, and I try to remember to erase the blackboard." [10]
>
> "Madeline Hunter went over well. I was pleasantly surprised. A lot of people used those techniques anyway. Maybe she isn't a guru, but they're doing it anyway. I didn't realize what I was doing. I have to admit that phrase "anticipatory set" goes through my mind." [12]
>
> "Madeline Hunter, I think, emphasizes to make each student accountable so I try to get work back [as soon as possible]." [14]
>
> "A lot of it is useful. It's probably the best workshop in a long time. Some of the techniques, I realized I should do more of them." [23]
>
> "The most valuable inservice I've been in. Fantastic." [29]
>
> "It was one of those rare times when we talked about what teaching really is." [80]
>
> "A lot of time was devoted to it. The points were excellent. There are things you do and find you've done it and now know why. It could have been condensed." [31]

Basically teachers accepted the suggested practices as additional input into how to teach students better. The prospect of evaluation was not a resented imposition; instead it was in line with a concern for making the classroom the locus of the best education the school could offer.

Accountability

The seeds for an increasing emphasis on grades and test scores were sown in 1976 when an outside evaluation team warned the school that, despite its excellence, it was in danger of becoming complacent. This event was recalled by both the superintendent and the new principal as a stimulus for introducing departmental mid-term exams, regular grade reports by teachers, grade analyses by departmental chairpersons, and heightened reliance on standardized test scores and student scholarship awards as indicators of program quality. One of them commented, "I believe this happened: There was no accountability system. No one applied systems to see if the kids were learning."

Faculty had mixed reactions to the changes. Most obvious to teachers was that accountability-related moves generated additional work. Just becoming more busy was a cause for complaints but not resistance unless it came at the expense of planning for or handling classroom related activities. For the most part, however, teachers complied and agreed with a greater emphasis on knowing where students stood.

> "The standardized exams forced us to talk with each other to make sure the material is covered." [83]
>
> "I work harder now, with attendance sheets, grade summaries, things of that nature, lesson plans to department chairpersons." [7]
>
> "Like getting a test back the next day...If you don't they're after you. You're working at night all the time. Then they throw other stuff on top of you." [4]
>
> "Yesterday they turned the day around to accommodate tests. Instead of getting my break, I went all the way through. You talk about exhausted. It's just a lot of little things like that. We weren't giving as many tests, so there's a new emphasis to have some kind of indication of how kids are doing. I check them out all year so why all of a sudden this thing." [15]
>
> "I don't have the time. Before I could pace myself. There is so much extra stuff now. I'm forced to lower my standards. For my own survival." [26]

> "I work harder in the classroom; I have to demand more." [30]
>
> "There is an enormous amount of paperwork." [36]
>
> "My pet gripe is the paperwork. It seems to be more and more." [53]
>
> "There is more paperwork." [39-and echoed by 38]
>
> "The extra amount of paperwork is taking too much time.: [50]
>
> "I feel I'm overworked. I can't give attention to one thing without feeling like I'm taking away from another." [40]

For a core of seven or eight teachers, the accountability move was more sinister. Instead of improving instruction, the changes weakened it; instead of increasing student achievement, the changes forced teachers to emphasize less the aspects of their subjects they deemed to be of the most enduring value; and instead of raising standards, the changes in fact required teachers to lower them. The increased resentment seemed not so much related to a perceived outside intrusion into teacher classroom decisions but that teachers felt that decisions affecting the classroom were not made with what the students should be learning in mind. One teacher succinctly summarized the dilemma this collection of teachers perceived confronted them:

> "Students may show up as testing better, but it's done something to the whole emotional atmosphere. I will not do it wrong, but I don't want to hurt the kids on the mid-term either...But a lot of what we're emphasizing is forgettable, except to teachers." [54]

The Disciplinary System

Specific changes in the disciplinary system were not as important as the philosophy that teachers felt were behind the system or the manner in which this philosophy led the system to be enforced.

> "When the new leaders came together, they appeared to have a different philosophy. It has slowly emerged and added to already occurring changes." [5]

> "Before there was a consistency in how people were treated as far as discipline. [Now] each kid should be taken on their own. It sounds fantastic on paper, but you end up with an uneasy student body. There is no pattern--always a question mark." [8]

> "A change in philosophy [has occurred]. The way things are done goes against the grain of smoothness that used to exist." [44]

> "Such a different philosophy. It is almost a reversal." [59]

> "When the new administration came in, they changed every administrator. We have a whole new game." [10]

> "The big change is the administration. It's hard to adjust to a difference in philosophy." [20]

> "We have given in too much. The new administration has done that too much." [21]

> "The administration has the philosophy of ultimate democracy where everyone's [input] treated exactly the same. It sounds fine on paper." [22]

> "Then the administration changed. The philosophy was different. It doesn't believe in applying rules equally to every kid. It sounds wonderful but the whole disciplinary framework is broken down." [23]

> "[The administrator] said he wanted the school to handle each kid differently, even if kids had done the same thing. It creates inconsistency. Kids know if they give a good story, they will get off." [35]

> "The administrative philosophy is oriented to the individual student." [37]

> "In saving one bad kid, we are sinking the good ones." [85]

> "The biggest cause of change is a difference in philosophy." [47]

The sheer repetition of the comments suggested that inroads were being made into the very core of the ethos that had evolved over the years. At one level, enforcement went against one of the three major tenets, and that would have been enough probably to elicit a strong negative response. But the emotion and almost near unanimity say that the faculty felt much more was at stake. Often the deep-rooted concern was inarticulable, a vaguely felt will-of-the-wisp; however, others seemed to recognize clearly the greater threat to the foundations of the school's tradition.

> "I've talked to teachers who say they feel like kids are running the school." [40]

> "The real question is who is to run the school. I think [the administration] thinks kids should run it. You know the old saying, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.'" [16]

> "The administration always sides with the kid." [76]

> "There is a prevailing attitude among students that they do have control. The staff feels it shouldn't have a power play with the kids." [45]

> "A lot of teachers feel like kids run the school. I'm not sure they're wrong." [48]

> "You don't ask kids if they want to be punished for being tardy." [12]

> "I believe in giving kids the opportunity to try something but not when I have the insight to know we're going in the wrong direction. They're allowed to drop-add courses; you can't set the rollbook until mid-October. I can understand, but it's out of control." [20]

Other teachers believed that the community and the potential of legal recourse drove many school decisions.

> "They aren't going to back you in front of parents." [42]

> "Good values and principles don't seem as regarded as what to do if you face a lawsuit." [56]

> "I think they're suit conscious; they don't get rid of kids who cannot handle classroom situations. A kid has a right to be taught. Those denying it should be removed. We have to get back to where the teacher controls the school." [21]

> "When the school gets one call from a parent, things are wild." [36]

> "The administration is very aware of the public image when it comes down to that, the school goes with the parent's wishes." [38]

> "Sometimes in schools you have adversarial relationships, but the administrative position is what's going to keep the image clean, what's going to appease the community, satisfy the parent, or quiet

> down this very disobedient child. Sometimes, it's hard to work in that environment." [5]
>
> "Any time a decision is made, the first thing thought of is, will a lawyer be with parents? It's almost like parents run the school." [37]

Three staff members spoke for many concerning what they believed to be the proper locus of decision-making.

> "For years this was a department-run school. That has changed." [19]
>
> "The experts on running the school are teachers." [41]
>
> "You want an immediate solution? Tell the administration and the state to leave the school and tell the school board and superintendent not to call the teachers." [3]

It was during discussions about discipline that almost all of the comments presented at the very beginning of this chapter were made. And discipline was always the first topic teachers brought up when asked the open-ended question, "What changes have been made in the school?" Its importance far outstripped what one would predict for a suburban school with a student body whose behavior, to outside observers and teachers new to the school, was generally unremarkable. As one relatively new teacher remarked, "I would say [to teachers who complain abut student behavior]; believe me, this is a piece of cake." [45]

What the discipline system's operation pointed out to teachers was that they perceived that the classroom was no longer the capitol, that student learning was not the ultimate touchtone for most decisions; instead public relations and legal issues guided judgment. The balance of control was shifting dramatically, from being classroom-centered to community- and student-centered from their viewpoint. In the process, teachers began to realize consciously that the second and third tenets discussed earlier were intricately entwined with the first. And the fabric woven over the years, in their minds, began to unravel.

Cultural Perspective II

Sarason (1971) convincingly argues that the culture of schools poses a considerable obstacle to change. Every alteration affects in some way an existing regularity in school functioning, be it norm, value, or practice. Reinforced by myth and ceremonies, those regularities become stubbornly entrenched. Often they are the force that repells the change, rather than the change being the force that alters operations.

A strong professional culture, however, is not a monolithic obstacle. The case of Westtown illustrates that instructional improvement was not only possible, in the case of the Madeline Hunter program, but welcomed. Even the accountability related changes were mostly accepted, albeit grudgingly. The apathetic responses, withdrawal, and refusal to cooperate were directed mostly at the changes that most brought into relief divergence from the classroom as capitol tenet.

What does this example suggest about the nature of school cultures? Primarily it indicates the existence of "untouchables," of definitions of the way school life is and should be that are not subject to tampering. These untouchables are a core of expectations for teacher, student, and administrative behavior that remains unquestioned and unchallenged. They are givens in that particular culture; their existence is exempt and protected from examination, experimentation, and/or revision. Indeed, to do otherwise would rock the foundations of the system, throwing all of school life into chaos, and creating intense reactions of despair about the future.

This discussion recalls a distinction about cultural phenomena that has been in existence for at least a hundred years between the sacred and the profane, or mundane as Gordon (1984) suggests. The two terms define completely different orders of reality, not just opposite poles of a continuum (Durkheim, 1965). The sacred is enduring, efficacious, and gives life its meaning (Eliande, 1959). For that reason, "As Durkheim points out, the ways in which we can approach the sacred are very limited. We must be diffident, careful, and respectful" (Gordon, 1984:96-97). On the other hand, the profane reflects the temporary adjustments to every day life, the transitory side of existence. It is continually being redefined. As a result, the profane can be debated, altered, planned, and improved; the sacred simply is, and unquestionably adhered to. It would not occur to members of the culture to consider alternative realities.

At Westtown, the classroom as the capitol approached having a sacred quality. Staff were unable to consider, much less approve of, decisions made on the basis of some set of criteria (such as public relations, legality, or political considerations) other than those related to improving learning. The tenet of consistent enforcement was somewhat untouchable but staff did acknowledge the existence of alternative approaches (e.g., every person is an individual and should be treated as such). They just felt that the alternatives were not preferable. The third tenet was highly valued as well, but again alternative forms of administration were recognized and not rejected out of hand in theory. The power that the latter two tenets had for staff derived solely from their relationship to preserving the classroom as the province of learning.

The professional culture at Westtown did not block change. Indeed, some changes were readily accepted as valid. For example, most staff members could agree that there was room for instructional improvement no matter how good the school. Resistance emerged only when a new definition of improvement contradicted a firmly entrenched one. The cultural system worked to channel the changes into areas that preserved existing ideas of what was and ought to be.

Epilogue

In the spring, teachers were asked how the situation at the school could be resolved. The answer was not clear to most; but reflecting a belief that the strength of the school was the faculty, the majority opinion argued that the faculty would ultimately be responsible for correcting the situation.

The following fall found a decidedly more upbeat faculty. Several adjustments in scheduling practices and in the discipline system conveyed a sense of increased order to teachers. In addition, last year's senior class, depicted as a particularly unruly cohort for years, was gone. A much more accomodative atmosphere prevailed, even in the face of a difficult contract dispute with the school board.

Others remained more reserved. The cyclical nature of time in educational institutions is such that each new year begins with hopes renewed and enthusiasm regenerated. These teachers wanted to watch a while longer to determine if the sun was indeed beginning to rise again.

CHAPTER THREE
MONROE HIGH SCHOOL: THE COMPREHENSIVE IDEAL AND BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT IN AN URBAN SETTING

"Teaching used to be fun. In one classroom, you would have 15 students, real A students, talking about ATP molecules and Kreb cycles. Now even the students who are supposed to be A students don't understand anything." [42]

"I don't get all that many honor society kids...You can write your curriculum to kids with low reading levels. It doesn't bother me. I see more light bulbs going off that way. That's what I call teaching." [12]

A school's culture does not exist in a vacuum. It draws upon beliefs, values, and ideas in the national culture and interprets them in light of local events and conditions. The story of Monroe High School illustrates this theme in two ways. First, it shows how teachers' senses of purpose are shaped by both national expectations for what high schools should be like and local demographic changes. Second, it provides an example of an additive change program that resulted from a state policy initiative and illustrates the interplay between teachers' senses of purpose and a change program.

Monroe High School

From the outside, Monroe High looks like a typical suburban high school of the 1950s. The long two-story brick building is fronted by a large, landscaped lawn. The track, football field, and baseball fields are on a large lot across the street that runs behind it. The front of the building has a good deal of glass and is very clean. Only in the back does one begin to see signs of an urban school such as trailers for classrooms covered with graffitti and additional paint marks on the white cement foundations under the bricks. The building was constructed at the edge of Monroe City in 1957 during a time when it served both the town of 40,000 and the surrounding suburbs. Since then the suburban districts have withdrawn from the agreement that sent their students to the high school, and the "best" black and white students in the city switched to private and parochial schools in the area. Enrollments have dropped from a one-time high of over 2,000 students to under 800. Seventy percent of the current students are black and 25 percent are Hispanic. About 70 percent of the students are poor enough to receive a free lunch.

Inside, the halls are clean and in good repair, but they are never really empty. Crowded with students between periods, there are always a few when class is in session, moving slowly somewhere, chatting among themselves, teasing and being moved along by the security aides who are mostly older women. One sees a substantial number of pregnant girls and hears casual conversations about the health of students' babies. Classroom doors are locked, not teachers say because they are afraid of violence as they were in the early 1970s, but because they get annoyed when students who roam the halls interrupt their classes.

The staff includes just less than 80 teachers, five counselors, a librarian, one principal, two vice-principals, two disciplinarians, a general-purpose administrative assistant, and eight security aides. On the average, teachers have worked over ten years in this building, and only a third worked in the building for five years or less.

Through the late 1960s and the 1970s, Monroe District experienced frequent turnover in administrators. Four teachers volunteered comments about changing superintendents. Eight specifically remembered four high school principals or more. This research began under one principal and was completed under a second. Many teachers now expect administrators to come and go while they and their colleagues remain:

> "There have been so many changes in administrators in the last six or seven years. Each one comes in with a new thing that we've been forced to adapt to. You get the feeling that you'll last longer than the administrator." [13]

> "Since 1967 we've had eight different department heads and supervisors. Each has had different methods. The superintendents all want different curricula....We've had a variety of principals and a turbulent, chaotic atmosphere.... The department staff stays. Everything else changes. That's why we stick together. We've weathered the storms." [05]

In 1980, Monroe District got a new superintendent who lasted longer than his predecessors and brought a level of stability to the district. This superintendent worked with the high school through a principal and the Department of Instruction. The principal who was there for most of the research was from inside the district. This was her first principalship. The Department of Instruction is administered by the Associate Superintendent for Instruction. Its supervisors helped with staff supervision and evaluation. Seven supervisors worked part-time in the high school. They played a strong role, taking on some tasks of department chairs and even vice-principals in other districts.

The superintendent faced two major issues related to the high school. The first was created by state policy. In the mid-1970s, the state legislature mandated a minimum competency test to be given to third, sixth, and ninth graders. Students had to pass the ninth grade test to graduate from high school. When the test was first administered, all scores from Monroe City were extremely low. The sixth grade average was the lowest in the state. From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, local newspapers periodically ran headlines like "City Students Falter at 6th Grade" and "Scores are Better But Still Too Low." In response to these low scores, the state department of education gave the district provisional rather than full certification and introduced a program of frequent monitoring which required state employees to visit the high school and check on its progress at least annually.

The Monroe District's plan for basic skills improvement began before the new superintendent's arrival, but he pursued it aggressively and expanded it to the high school. Moreover, even after the major public crisis had passed, he continued to push for improved basic skills instruction. As late as 1985, his annual mission statement had basic skills objectives that were publicized to district teachers. These objectives specified the number of students who would meet certain criterion levels on the California Achievement Test and the state's competency test.

The second issue--low "morale"--was limited to the high school and received little publicity outside the district. The perception among teachers was that many of them were looking to leave the school:

> "I don't know what to do about the staff here. They're all waiting to retire. They don't give a damn." [31]
>
> "Good teachers are being put down a lot. They are not happy. Many of them are looking to move or retire." [48]

This perception was based on casual conversations among teachers like the following taken from field notes:

> One teacher said she would retire when she gets to 20 years because she will have a big enough pension. Another said she has 25 years now. She would quit but she needs to get to 55 years old to get the better benefits. She is 45.

Eleven of the 54 teachers interviewed indicated that they would like to leave teaching. Only two wanted to move up to an administrative position. The rest wanted to get away from what they saw as a stressful or unrewarding job situation. Four of those said they were staying because changing jobs would mean a loss of salary.

Teachers' reasons for wanting to leave were summarized in the following observation:

> "Staying here will kill me eventually. There's so much paper work. It's always due yesterday. You're constantly being watched, observed, and scanned. There's too much pressure....The kids are part of it too. Meeting their demands. You have to watch for cuts and behavior problems. Writing up cuts takes time." [56]

This comment pointed to two problems. One had to do with teachers' relations with students:

> "I see rudeness and defiance rather than 'I'm a sick kid. Help me'...Anymore I can't come up and put my arms around a kid and say 'What's wrong?'" [50]

> "Kids get on your nerves. Their language. Their arguments." [07]

> "Information sails over their heads...I got the answer that Hitler led the Jews out of the promised land. Hitler wrote the Declaration of Independence." [46]

A third of the teachers (18 of 54) made some complaint about the students they taught.

Even more teachers complained about how they were treated by the administration. Over half the teachers (30 of 54) volunteered some complaint about the building or district administration. They complained about special tasks that they disliked and lack of administrative support. They inferred negative administrative attitudes towards themselves to which they reacted very strongly:

> "Downtown treats us like garbage!" [35]

> "Teachers are willing to do more than we're told to do. We're not given enough initiative. We're supervised to death. There's a one-way pipeline from downtown and the building administration to us." [06]

> "We are undermined on discipline. Take the no-hat policy. The administration makes a big deal about it. I wouldn't let a student in class with a hat on. He went to the office. The

> principal said, 'Oh let him in as long as he doesn't wear it.' I'm trying to follow their rule." [51]

Tensions had risen to the point that the central office administration was as angry with the teachers as the teachers were with them. One important central office administrator observed that

> "This faculty has defeated a lot of people....Basically, they want to be left alone. They don't realize that [the state competency tests] are facts of life. They want to be left alone....It's like if you get on a plane to California and the pilot says we aren't going to California. We'll go to Florida. That's what they want." [22]

This last comment suggests that the efforts to increase students' basic literacy had increased the strain between teachers and the district office. That was in fact the case. To understand why it was so, it is useful to first explore the teachers' sense of purpose and then the district's program.

Definitions of Purpose and Views of Students

The Monroe High School teachers' definitions of purposes were shaped by the departmental structure of the organization. Monroe had all the departments typically found in a comprehensive high school. The English, foreign language, mathematics, and science departments attended to college preparatory and advanced academic objectives. Instruction in the basic skills was provided by the English, mathematics, reading, and special education departments. Vocational preparation and other life skills were taught by the industrial arts, business, home economics, and health and physical education departments. Formal instruction related to a democratic society was provided by the social studies department which also has some academic responsibilities.

The culture of Monroe High School developed understandings about how this formal structure worked that provided teachers with guidelines about what their purposes should be. One generally shared assumption was that teachers should teach their speciality. If that speciality did bear directly on the improvement of basic literacy skills, then the teacher should not be responsible for helping students learn them. One typing teacher expressed this assumption as follows:

> "Our job is to prepare students for the business world. English should work on the students' reading ability, and the math department should work on math. Indirectly, I can help; but directly, no...I shouldn't have to teach basic skills...But I can tell who has low basic skills by how they proof. They're here to learn how to type. That's what I should teach." [03]

This comment also illustrated a problem with this division of labor. While most teachers were not responsible for basic literacy instruction, the lack of basic skills impeded their efforts to teach their own fields.

Perspectives on Teaching

From this starting point teachers developed their own perspectives on what it means to teach their specialities. These perspectives were different from subcultures because they did not map neatly onto clear subsets of individuals. The departments did form such subsets, but two or more perspectives might be found within one of them. In fact, the same individual might make a statement indicative of one perspective at one time and another at a later time. The perspectives did represent definitions of purpose that were apparent among Monroe teachers and recognized by them. Four separate perspectives appeared in among the teachers: the academic, the balanced, the vocational, and the psychological development.

Teachers holding the academic perspective were particularly interested in their subject matter, specifically to introducing students to the more advanced aspects of their field. For many teachers who articulated this perspective, their field had an intrinsic appeal. They found the subjects inherently interesting and enjoyed working on the more challenging issues that were incorporated into the secondary curriculum. Thus, teachers reported that:

> "I enjoy calculus. I can work out Algebra II problems without doing the homework. I have to do the problems in calculus. I enjoy the refresher...When I get the answer right, I feel like the kids do." [27]
>
> "I enjoy teaching classical literature because I enjoy it, and I think educated kids need it." [07]
>
> "I like teaching the subject I love. I would prefer teaching at a higher level than I am now. I'd like to get into literature and character study." [16]

Teachers did not just enjoy their fields. They also believed that their special competence came from their knowledge of the subject matter and how to present it. They were wary of any definition of their task that required other kinds of expertise:

> "I am not a social worker or a psychiatrist. I'm not trained to work with traumas. I'm interested in academic development. That's why I'm in teaching." [09]

The academic perspective was found primarily among the teachers of the traditional college preparation subjects--English, mathematics, foreign languages, and science--although it was held by a few people in other fields. Generally, it was associated with an interest in preparing students for college. Since college preparation is an important and prestigious function for high schools, this perspective also had a certain appeal to administrators as will be seen below.

Teachers holding the balanced perspective were also interested in their subject matter, but not necessarily in teaching the advanced courses. The balance was between the interest in the subject matter and in the student as the following comment indicates:

> "Geometry is my favorite...[Another teacher] doesn't like geometry 'cause teaching proofs is tough to these kids. I don't get frustrated. I have tremendous patience...I like geometry and I like teaching geometry." [25]

Many of these teachers tried to make a reasonable accommodation to students who would not benefit from a heavily academic curriculum by finding what they can be taught beneficially:

> "I taught English...If students are prepared, English is more interesting, but students can't read so you have to work at an elementary level...It made better sense to work where they were." [37]

Not only are these teachers willing to teach a different intellectual content, they are more patient when working with students on the behavioral prerequisites for instruction. According to one teacher, they "are "elementary based. They are more willing to hound students to bring pencils and notebooks to class" [35]. Most teachers in the reading department (who refer to themselves as elementary oriented) held the balanced perspective as did some teachers in the English and mathematics departments.

The vocational perspective was found among the teachers in the industrial arts, business, home economics and even health and physical education departments. Teachers who held this perspective were less concerned with teaching advanced courses, and saw those courses somewhat differently. Advanced vocational courses did not necessarily require higher intellectual skills or provide greater challenges to teachers. Instead they were more practical and directly job related. Thus, teachers in both health and home economics wanted to develop programs to prepare students more directly for work in fields related to their specialties:

> "I expect that Middle States will say that if [this field] continues, we will need a coop program. I'm ready. I hope they will let me run it." [12]

The psychological development perspective was very broad. It included an emphasis on developing self-esteem.

> "I work with their self-feelings. I want to drop History II and do more to prepare them for jobs. A lot of these kids don't think they're important. That's bad. I build up their respect." [48]

Another element was a concern with teaching students appropriate behavior.

> "I think social studies should be about behavior. If I saw my students hassling another teacher, I'd talk to them about their behavior. We talk about behavior a lot." [45]

These teachers were more likely to refer to a knowledge base that comes from understanding students than subject matter expertise.

> "Yes, we have knowledge. I bring in expectations for individualizing. For instance, I didn't push [a girl who thinks she is pregnant] because I knew about her problem." [54]

This more diffuse sense of caring for children's self-esteem, and behavioral development was found primarily among the special education teachers and to some extent as a secondary theme among a few English and social studies teachers.

For Monroe teachers to develop a common sense of purpose, it would be helpful if these divergent perspectives could be brought together in a single mission. Instead, there was a distinct element of tension and competition among them. The most apparent was between the academic and the vocational perspectives. This tension did not appear so much among teachers as between vocational teachers and administrators and counselors. It inhibited efforts to broaden curricular offerings:

> "[The districts' administrators] want to see themselves as running an academic school with a clientele that's not prepared for academic life. Any curricular movement towards anything else is defeated. We had a [content area] careers orientation program that didn't work...We wrote a proposal and got [equipment] but we never got a curriculum...There never was a commitment from the district." [31]

This tension also appeared in competition for students where teachers of the vocational and practical subjects felt overmatched by administrators and counselors. Four teachers explicitly described a double bind. They had to maintain adequate enrollments for their programs to continue. Yet, the brightest students were counseled away from their fields into college preparation courses, and the students with academic deficiencies were unavailable because they are required to take remedial courses. During the research, specialized agricultural and graphic arts programs were eliminated for lack of enrollments. Shortly afterwards, in another context, the superintendent made a public commitment to keep more academic courses like calculus and advanced science courses in the curriculum even with very low enrollments.

The "Right" Kind of Student

Teachers' perspectives on what they should teach were associated with different expectations about the students they should teach. They varied considerably in their willingness to work with what they saw as "low ability" students. At the most exclusive extreme some teachers only wanted the top track students who they viewed as sharing their interests. When teachers worked with these students, they looked for opportunities to enrich their curriculum in ways that allowed them to share their interests. Thus, one senior English teacher researched little-known black writers of the 1930s in order to bring something different and more intriguing to his class.

These same teachers found the basic literacy classes repetitive and draining, lacking the stimulation of the more advanced classes:

> "We don't teach the term paper to all students. We teach a term report to some cause they can't do a paper. A term report doesn't deal with a thesis. It's not much more than get a topic, gather information, and arrange it. Last year, I had two low eleventh grade classes. Out of 50 students, I was so angry, all but two turned in papers...When we did the outline I worked with each student individually to help write it. I write it with them. Sometimes, I'll actually write it. It's the worst kind of labor to go through that with 45 or 50 kids." [11]

A few teachers were so angry that the "right" students were not available that they refused to recognize real signs of interest when they occur. Even with a class that responded to a lecture and demonstration with interested questions, one teacher commented that "You have to keep your spirits up" [42].

Teachers evaluated students on two dimensions. The first was intellectual or academic performance. Here they usually identified the problems:

> "Why should we remediate what should have been taken care of in elementary school? They shouldn't be here if they can't read and write." [56]

> "You should be able to take things for granted that you can't. When I put the formula, area equals length times width, on the board and assume that students know what I mean when I substitute in numbers, I can run into problems." [06]

> "In a college prep class, I have to show students how to do long division. I shouldn't have to. It slows down the good kids, and it slows down the work." [41]

The comment that a teacher is willing to teach "low ability" students because he or she "sees light bulbs going off that way" is the exception to the rule among Monroe teachers. Fourteen teachers indicated that students generally lacked some academic prerequisites for what they taught.

The second dimension was student attitudes towards school and self-control. The issues can ranged from forgetting to bring pencils and books to class, through not doing homework, to disrupting the class. One teacher tried to understand behavior that was found to be disruptive:

> "Their environments are mind boggling. [A girl] lives with her mother. There is another man in the house, but the mother is not married to him because she may get married to someone else. Yet there are step children. There are social complexities beyond my comprehension. In one class I had five pregnant girls. And you talk about intellectual development. It's absurd. The girls always had to go to the bathroom, and one had morning sickness." [09]

Others simply described how students' behavior made it difficult to conduct class:

> "Most of them can do the work. They're immature...There are certain stories that some of them like, but their habits are chronic...Chronic laziness...They pick and choose a lot what they like. Vocabulary they don't mind, but very few will do the reading." [05]

> "Attendance is another problem. A lot of kids don't come to school. School is not a priority." [36]

> "Most kids don't want to work. They won't do homework. Even in the good classes." [28]

Twenty-two teachers saw these attitudes as a barrier to what they defined as appropriate teaching. Only a handful defined them as a problem to work on.

> "It's not what I teach them academically. It's what I teach them behaviorally. These kids are gonna get jobs. If they can learn responsibility and to control their emotions, that's the biggest thrust of special education. Life skills." [54]

There was a definite association between teachers' perspectives and their inclusiveness. Those who held the academic perspective were the most likely to be exclusive, to be impatient about students' intellectual skills and self-control. These characteristics were, after all, prerequisites for the kind of teaching they wanted to do. Those who held the psychological development perspective were generally the most patient since part of their job, as they defined it, was to work with students on their behavior and to find an intellectual content that was appropriate for them. The teachers with the balanced and vocational perspective typically fell somewhere in between. Some were willing to teach and reteach patiently, to teach to lower ability students to see "the light bulbs going off," and to "hound" students about books and pencils. Others were nearly as impatient and frustrated as the academic teachers.

Beliefs and Instruction

The beliefs associated with the academic perspective--strong interest in one's subject matter and impatience with students' skill levels and behavior--were enacted in a number of ways. Some included adjustments of formal curricular and evaluation arrangements. The question these arrangements raised is how to respond to commonly held standards for high school performance. Curricular standards were reduced:

> "Once the school became predominantly black, the curriculum changed. I went to an all-black school, and they had high expectations for me there. I don't see how come a person doesn't expect the same thing from anyone as a black." [18]

The curriculum was usually adjusted through the selection of texts that were easier to read or the switch from term papers to "term reports" discussed above. The effect was often to ask less of the same content from students rather than to ask for something more instructionally appropriate.

Other teachers decided to maintain the grading standards they had used when Monroe High had a more diverse student clientele:

> "We fail a lot of students. A couple of people have failed most students in their classes. The administration wants us to give them higher grades. The old timers feel that if students get an A in a college prep class, they should do what the students did ten years ago, but the students are not as good and not as prepared." [41]

This response was limited to one department. Other teachers were more likely to pass students. Some, though, would speak of situations where "if he receives a C, it's a gift" [05]. These teachers referred to the same standards as those used by the departments that failed most students, but they accommodated by scaling down. If the student did not misbehave in class, she or he was allowed to pass.

Within the classroom, teachers' frustrations come out in a number of ways. Some teachers made insulting comments to students:

> "I hope that if I put the date for the War of 1812 on the test you'll all get it, but knowing some of you..." [47]
>
> "Some of you in here still can't plot a graph after we've been doing it for so many days. Some people can't even draw a straight line with a ruler. Would you believe it? Would you believe it!?" [30]

Teachers who made these comments were likely to make the more negative interpretation of student behavior when more positive ones were equally possible. Thus, when one student asked how one animal family inherited a characteristic from another one, the teacher said that the student took the idea of cross-species inheritance "literally," prompting a spirited defense by the student, rather than noting the effort to draw connections between the current lesson and what had been taught earlier [42].

According to students, a second response was cryptic teaching, the failure to explain concepts fully and make sure that students understand:

> "Some teachers give homework and don't ask for it or check it. They just go on to other work. Teachers who care check to see if you understand. They ask if you understand." [58]

> "[A good teacher] is a person who gives you a picture of what she is saying. Some just take 20 minutes and say do your work. Then they get upset when you get a low grade. The better ones take the time to ask if you have questions." [59]

A third response was to get rid of unwanted students. According to one teacher:

> "Some teachers send students down [to the office] for frivolities, things that should be handled in the classroom. You'd be amazed at the things kids get sent down for...a lot of trivial referrals and abdications. Some teachers are proud of it. They say, 'I got rid of him fast.'" [35]

The disciplinarians in the school were overwhelmed with the number of referrals from teachers and ran a backlog of as much as two weeks, leading to complaints from teachers about lack of administrative support. Part of the backlog stemmed from some teachers' unwillingness to handle certain problems themselves. The principal devoted two staff meetings to workshops on how teachers could better handle disciplinary problems without referrals. Students were not just sent to the disciplinarians, however. The librarian complained that many were sent to the library; others went to the cafeteria; still others were simply allowed to roam the halls; and some left the building.

Harsh grading, insults, cryptic teaching, and sending difficult students out of class were not engaged in by all teachers. Some go to great lengths to avoid these activities.

> "I put paper down in front of students carefully. Otherwise, they will be insulted. I expect students to do the same with me. If a student pushes a paper at me and doesn't apologize, I won't pick it up until we clear it up." [35]

Where those activities occurred, they were enactments of teachers' frustrations, but they also added to frustrations by increasing the likelihood of teacher-student conflict thus creating a vicious cycle.

Sources of Purpose

As suggested in the introduction, teachers' multiple perspectives on what they should teach and range of exclusiveness in dealing with students did not develop out of "raw cloth." The perspectives were manifestations of larger currents in American society. They developed out of the school's departmental structure which is an effort to institutionalize prevailing views about what high schools should accomplish. In spite of some dissent (Sizer, 1984; Boyer, 1983), prevailing thinking is still shaped by the ideal of the comprehensive high school. This ideal holds that the purposes of the high school should be broad enough to include students from the full range of races, economic backgrounds, and achievement levels in American society as long as they are between the ages of 14 and 17. As a result instructional goals are quite diverse.

Conant's (1959) popularization of this ideal specified three objectives for secondary education: education for citizenship, education for a job, and college preparation. These themes remain enduring threads in discussions of what high schools should accomplish. Since Conant's formulation there has been some shift in the purposes of high school with a tendency to give greatest attention to the students at the two ends of the ability continuum, the precollegiate and the special education students (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). These developments provide the basis for three of the four perspectives identified in Monroe High:

The academic perspective reflects the college preparation objective,

> The vocational perspective reflects the vocational preparation objective, and
>
> The psychological development perspective reflects the growing concern with students at the bottom of the achievement distribution, especially those in special education.

The balanced perspective is perhaps appropriate for the vast middle range of the ability distribution that Powell et al. (1985) argue are poorly served by the modern high school.

While Conant's formulation makes college preparation one objective among three, that theme has a special place in thinking about high schools. Its history precedes that of the comprehensive ideal. The earliest American high schools were institutions to prepare elites for college (James & Tyack, 1983). The college preparation function expanded in the post-war period as the proportion of teenagers going on to college grew. This expansion was driven by the belief that higher education would enhance opportunities for upward mobility (Cohen & Neufeld, 1981). More recently, interest in the most rigorous portions of the high school curriculum has been enhanced by reports of a variety of commissions making recommendations for the improvement of secondary education (e.g., National Commission Excellence in Education, 1983). It is this pervasive interest in college preparation and academic rigor that gives the academic perspective such power among both teachers and administrators.

The comprehensive ideal is implicitly intended for a student body with a wide range of abilities and future careers. If anything, it underestimates the problems of the children of the poor who frequently lack the prerequisite skills to address the curriculum objective inherent in this idea. Yet American schools are becoming more segregated in terms of wealth, race, and ethnicity (Abramowitz & Rosenfeld, 1978). Public schools in major cities are increasingly filled with students whose problems, aspirations, and out-of-school resources do not fit the assumptions of the comprehensive ideal (Hamilton, 1984). The comprehensive ideal offers no prescription for serving these students.

Monroe High School became associated with the issues confronting a poor, minority student population in a dramatic manner. In the early 1960s, it had an integrated student body and drew a substantial number of academically able students from two suburban districts that did not have high schools. The transition from that period is a frequently retold story in the central teacher culture of the school.

The earlier period now seems like a golden age to older Monroe teachers. Those who were interested report that they could teach more advanced academic classes and had the reward of seeing a substantial number of their students go to better colleges and universities. This period was followed by "the riot years" from about 1969 to 1972 caused by racial strife between students. The schools were closed, frequently because of fights between black and white students. In 1985, teachers still talked about "the riot squads on the lawn" and the policemen who were unwilling to come into the school alone. They remembered the serious problems they had controlling their classes and achieving any instructional ends. This period ended when the two suburban schools stopped sending students to Monroe High and most of the white and more academically mobile black families in Monroe City began sending their children to private schools. Teachers believed that this change reduced the achievement level of the student body declined. One ending of this story is that "everything changed, and they left us with the dregs" [11].

The Basic Literacy Program and Teacher Responses

Teachers' perspectives promoted interest in a wide range of subject areas. For most, their perspectives provided an explanation for why they should not help students attain basic skills literacy. Nor did some perspectives create understanding or a sense of responsibility for the students who lacked those skills. Yet, poor basic skills achievement had become a recognized problem. State competency tests publicized it, and state monitoring and public outcries created pressures to adopt a solution. The district did develop a program to address the problem, but teachers' perspectives on teaching and their understandings of appropriate teacher-administrator relations created resentment and limited compliance to the most visible activities. Yet, the program succeeded in increasing students' test scores.

Elements of the Program

When the new superintendent began work in 1980, he found an outside consulting organization already working with the district on basic skills instruction. After examining that organization's approach, he made it the centerpiece of the district's program. It was introduced to Monroe High in 1982.

The consultants' approach stressed the strengthening of administrative monitoring and supervision of teachers to maximize their effectiveness. It identified a number of key variables that could be manipulated to increase the quality of instruction in the basic skills and other areas and worked with the district to develop effective monitoring devices. The two variables that received the greatest attention in Monroe district were "time-on-task"--that is the amount of time available for instruction--and "curriculum articulation" or the fit between what was taught and what was tested. The district introduced activities in both areas.

The time-on-task activity focused on classroom management. Initially, teachers received instruction on how to increase instructional time in their classrooms. The consultants gave a great deal of attention to measuring instructional time. The mechanism they developed was called the "scan." An administrator would come into a classroom for fifteen minutes. At regular intervals, she or he would note the number of students engaged in such on-task behaviors as listening to the teacher or working on exercises and such off-task behavior as getting out books, talking to other students, or looking out the window. A few simple calculations after the observation period gave the administrator the class' engagement rate which was shared with the teacher.

The consultants' theory also noted how instructional time could be increased by focusing on a number of school-wide considerations. One could cut time spent passing in the halls by reducing the number of periods in the classroom day and minimize such classroom interruptions as PA announcements. However, during this study, no effort was made to change Monroe High's eight-period schedule with its frequent class changes. The number of PA announcements during class time varied during the observation period, but at the extreme there were as many as six a day.

The curriculum alignment piece began with a careful analysis of the school's curriculum. Departments were asked to compare what was taught with the content of the achievement tests used by the district and the state's minimum competency test. Teachers then rewrote the curriculum as a series of objectives to be met each quarter. These objectives were to be coordinated with the achievement and minimum competency tests. Departments that did not normally teach the minimum competencies were to incorporate activities related to them in their curriculum.

The district's curriculum alignment monitoring involved two separate documents to be completed by teachers. Before each quarter began, teachers were to complete a quarterly topic plan (QTP) indicating which objectives would be addressed, the amount of time to be spent on each, the materials used to work on the objective, and the dates by which work on each objective would be complete. These were reviewed by supervisors and returned to teachers. As each objective was completed, the teachers were expected to record on the QTP the "success-rate"--that is, the number of students who got a C or better on a test related to the objective. The second document was the weekly lesson plan which elaborated the QTP and indicated what the teacher would do each day. During classroom observations, administrators and supervisors would ask to see QTPs and lesson plans and would determine if in fact teachers were on the schedule they specified in the QTP. The administrators' rationale for emphasizing following the schedule was that it ensured that students were introduced to all the content on which they would be tested at the end of the year.

While teachers came to see the scans and the QTPs as the core of the formal program, there were several other elements. First, there was a series of remedial reading and mathematics courses for students who did not pass the minimum competency test at the end of the ninth grade. Students who continued to fail the test remained in these courses until the end of their senior year; and all ninth graders were required to take reading as well as English. Second, administrators and teachers worked to impress on students the importance of doing well on the minimum competency and achievement tests. School staff reasoned that students did poorly on the tests partly because they did not think their scores mattered. As a result, administrators bombarded students at assemblies and through PA announcements with reminders of how important the tests were and that they could not graduate unless they passed the minimum competency test. These announcements reached their peak in the weeks before a test.

Finally, students were drilled specifically for the test. The district had access to old versions of the minimum competency test. In the weeks before the tests were given, English, reading, and mathematics teachers had students practice taking the old tests. In 1985 when the state switched to a harder test, a university professor developed practice book for it. The district bought copies of it and had teachers in relevant subjects use them as the major portion of the curriculum in the weeks before the new test, even indicating that work in the book should supercede activities described in the QTPs.

This overview of the program highlights two important characteristics. First, the program was an effort to modify and monitor certain teacher activities like their use of classroom time and the speed at which they covered a certain curriculum. Teachers were given considerable leeway in their initial planning although drilling on the tests as mandatory. However, the administration monitored carefully to ensure that plans were followed, and deviations from schedules had to be explained. From the administrative perspective, the program was an accountability mechanism to ensure that teachers engaged in what were viewed as correct or appropriate behaviors. One key district administrator asked:

> "When we do observations, how tough are we in holding teachers accountable for goals? When students don't do well, they don't pass. When teachers don't do well, they should get a poor

> evaluation and no salary increment...If we as supervisors and principals don't hold the line, we're in collusion with teachers for poor success rates for students." [23]

While this same administrator would have liked to have teachers more accepting and enthusiastic about the program, the bottom line was not intended to be attitudinal or cultural change. The main concern was additive changes to ensure that they engaged in expected behaviors.

Second, the various parts of the program impacted on teachers in different ways. All teachers were monitored through the use of scans and QTPs, and most were asked to incorporate activities to improve students' basic skills in their classroom activities. Still, the burden of preparing students directly for the achievement and minimum competency tests--whether through the drill activities or through the regular curriculum--fell primarily on the 22 teachers in the English, reading, and mathematics departments, about one quarter of the faculty. This number over-represents the professional time available for working on basic literacy skills because some of those teachers had courses like calculus or senior English did not emphasize the basic skills.

Teacher Responses to the Program

Teachers had three reactions to the program. First it violated their conceptions of appropriate teaching. Since these conceptions differed according to teachers' perspectives, the specific concerns they had varied. The academic teachers objected to the drill activities used to prepare students for the minimum competency and district achievement tests. These teachers referred to the drill activity as "teaching to the test" to indicate that they did not view it as a legitimate form of instruction that focused on appropriate ends.

> "We aren't teaching them how to think. We're teaching them how to take tests." [10]

> "We're test oriented here. No teacher objects to that. Our emphasis is too much in some areas though. We spend so much time reviewing grammar in the eleventh and twelfth grade. There should be more reading and developing thought processes and interpretation skills. Our children aren't being prepared for college in terms of what they read." [06]

Eight teachers raised this objection.

Teachers who took a balanced or vocational perspective objected to the requirement that they specify the date by which specific objectives would be reached. They were concerned that if a student did not master the objective in the required time, they would not have an opportunity to provide more assistance:

> "There shouldn't be as much emphasis on dates. Even if you get a week behind, the kids should master an objective. They're pushed and pushed and pushed. They've been pushed too far already. That's why they are where they are." [51]

> "I have a student who can't divide. How do you teach him volume and area? Is it better to teach division or to follow the objectives?" [24]

Six teachers raised this concern. They actually shared the administration's goal of teaching students basic skills. However, they were divided over the means, whether it was better to help students master specific objectives--sometimes including prerequisite skills--or to touch on everything that would be tested. This division could create friction:

> "I don't gear myself to the quarterly. I gear myself to the class. It doesn't matter to me if the date I'm supposed to finish is February 22 and I finish on February 28. If the administration wants to reprimand me, that's their prerogative, but I won't change." [05]

Teachers who did not teach basic skills per se objected to having activities focusing on those topics added to their courses:

> "We have to put basic skills into out lesson plans for each day. When you are teaching [a foreign language], you teach basic

> skills every minute, but you must write in a basic skills. Talk about paper work. I play the game, but isn't it silly?" [14]
>
> "I'd like to drop all the writing part from [my field]. Maybe allow more creativity. Students resent the time they spend reading and note taking. They get tense for that. It always happens just before an objective...Most of the learning comes from the hands-on not the written part." [56]

Teachers who used a great deal of hands-on activities in vocational areas and in other areas as well objected to the scans. The coding procedures used counted getting out materials and cleaning up as time-off-task. This reduced the instructional time scores in craft-oriented classes, and teachers feared those scores would give the impression that time was being wasted. They saw getting out materials as an integral part of the learning process or at least necessary for the craft activities and felt that their work was being misrepresented by the instructional time score. One teacher who was not as dependent upon activities with elaborate set-up and clean-up tasks noted that she could do such activities, but she would make a point of not doing them when she was being scanned [14]. Six teachers raised this concern.

A second reaction to the program was that the formal accountability scheme reduced the complex, interactive aspect of teaching to numbers and checkpoints that were too simplistic to capture the important aspects of instruction. Teachers believed that much of their work required coping with contingencies they did not control, but the accountability scheme seemed to ignore those factors.

To teachers, the most important contingency was the students. This was apparent in their concerns about the scans where their instructional time scores were heavily dependent upon student performances. These could work for the teacher.

> "[This class] is undisciplined, not physically. In terms of responsibility and concentration span. I had [a district official and an outsider] drop in. They were so good. They asked questions and gave answers. Afterwards, I asked them why they were so good. They said, 'We wanted them to know we like you.' That's the greatest accolade." [43]

A class could also work against a teacher. Another teacher told about a class that was so worried by the presence of the principal that students would not participate at all [51]. Teachers are also quite aware of how individual students responded to the scan process. One told about a student who figured out that the observer was counting the number of students looking down at each click of the clock. That student made a point of looking up and away every time the clock clicked [21]. Another told of a student who pretended to study through an observation period because she did not know why the observer was there [53].

Students' unpredictability also affected teachers' ability to stay on the schedule specified in the QTP. Sometimes the issue was the students' ability to master the material:

> "In algebra, we did a unit on fractions and polymonial fractions. I thought it would be easy, but it wasn't so I lengthened that section. I've been able to cut days off of other topics." [26]

At other times the concern is student behavior.

> "If I'm supposed to do paragraphs, and one kid comes in and is gonna beat another kid up, you have to work on coping skills. Why are you gonna beat him up? Lets make a list of pros and cons. You can't deal with that with QTPS. You're not supposed to deviate. I do. The dates are not that worthwhile." [54]

It was not just that the forms could not account for such routine unexpected events. The administration of the supervisory system did not reflect what teachers saw as important:

> "[My supervisor] came in unannounced. Two kids came in from the gym and one tried to pick a fight with the other. I told them they couldn't fight here. I took them into the hall and calmed them down. Then I let them back in the class and conducted

> class...After class my supervisor told me my lesson plans and quarterlies didn't match like it's a big to do...I don't care! It's the class that counts." [24]

While students were the primary contingency, administrative action was another. Teachers did not know enough details of the administration of tests or assemblies to be able to accurately set dates for quarterlies.

> "It's nice to try to plan ten weeks in advance, but you can't plan for the minimum basic skills test or the achievement test or activity days ten weeks in advance. You can have the dates, but you won't know how it will impact on your courses. You can't fine tune it that well." [01]

> "They expect us to use the quarterlies as weeklies. The weekly lesson plans are to be followed, but things change. Today some classes are 30 minutes long. Some are 40 and some are 60. Today's plans are shot. They'll say this situation is unique because of the testing, but there are three or four testing sessions a year." [06]

Between the students and administrators, 12 teachers believed that they could not predict events well enought to set a schedule in advance. As a result, they felt that they were being held accountable for events that were only partly under their control.

The third reaction was that the administration of the program violated teachers' conceptions of appropriate relationships with administrators. One manifestation of this concern was a recurring objection to the way teachers' time was used. Teachers objected that their time was "wasted" on things not directly related to their teaching work. This objection spread well beyond the improvement program itself to repeated complaints about the length of staff meetings. A related concern was the amount of paperwork teachers had to do. Eleven teachers mentioned this problem.

Within the program, concerns about time and paperwork focused on the QTPs. Teachers objected that the work put in on these and related documents did not contribute to their teaching:

> "We don't do quarterlies for ourselves We do them for the administration." [51]
>
> "The quarterlies are redundant. Everything in the quarterlies is in the curriculum. I know where I'm going. I'd rather use the time to do things for the class. [The principal] says, 'but you're given time to fill out the quarterlies.' That's not the point. Why do things that are already done?" [14]
>
> "I was out sick one week last year. My plans were complete. I keep them on my desk like I'm supposed to though I don't need them. I called in after three days. The administrators didn't know what to do with my classes. I said use my plans. They said the plans are not for the sub. They're for you. Well, Damn! I don't need the plans." [35]

Indeed, two teachers offered minor suggestions in the three existing, but overlapping forms—the curriculum, the QTPs, and the lesson plans--that would reduce paperwork teachers had to do. The administration's failure to make such changes was frustrating to teachers. One referred to this aspect of his job as "scribe work."

A more general reflection on teacher-administrator relations was what was described as a prevailing negativism.

> "My attitude is things are getting better. They could get better still if some administrators would be kinder to teachers...Four or five years ago, the superintendent said, lets accentuate the positive. They accentuate the negative." [25]
>
> "I don't know if the perception of the administration is that teachers are lazy, inept, or incapable. We're treated with disdain, maybe with contempt. There's a very negative environment perpetuated by the administration." [09]
>
> "Sometimes a pat on the back helps more than a kick you know where." [48]

This negativism was detected in little actions. For instance, the math teacher who was reprimanded for not having lesson plans and QTPs that match after she had broken up a fight commented that:

> "[The supervisor's] tone of voice annoyed me like I was a bad kid. I'd better fix things up before they come to evaluate me or they'll put me on record." [24]

More frequently, teachers pointed to the accountability system as something that implied that all teachers were bad teachers:

> "This district says 10 percent of the people aren't doing their job so lets make everyone dot their i's and cross their t's and do ridiculous, rudimentary things to cover those 10 percent." [35]

> "I was told [the scans] were not intended for me. They were for the bad teachers. That's ridiculous. It's caused morale problems. People are antagonistic." [43]

> "There are a lot of good people here who are never told they're good. A lot of people who care, who are too professional to waste time in class. To have scans assumes that you may not be doing that." [41]

With such a formalized system, there might have been a concern that it was being used to punish and remove teachers. Opinion was divided on this question. Three teachers explicitly indicated that punishment was not a concern:

> "No one puts pressure on you to follow the quarterly. They're defeated because there are too many of us. How can one person monitor quarterlies and plans and be a disciplinarian?"

> Q: Can't they tell by observing?

> "No...You can write down something that makes sense to you but that others don't understand so they can't tell if you're doing it or not." [46]

Other people referred to incidents where procedures were being used to remove people:

> "[My evaluation] looked fair. It was better than average with these lousy evaluations they are giving now." [46]

> They decide to nail one teacher...People who've been here twenty or thirty years suddenly get poor evaluations. You wonder how that can be after twenty years of no bad evaluations." [49]

To summarize, teachers did not see the program as something that helped them to teach students better. Instead, they identified specific procedures that violated their conceptions of good teaching, they were worried about a system that seemed too rigid and simplistic to reflect the contingencies of teaching, and they believed it was administered in a way that violated their conception of appropriate teacher-administer relationships.

The Program and Basic Skills Competence

While the program contributed to the strained working conditions for teachers and to the tensions with administrators, it had its intended effects on student test scores. Between the springs of 1980 and 1985 the percent of students passing the state minimum competency test increased from 53.9 to 93.9 in communications skills and from 36.8 to 88.6 in computation. This test was limited to ninth graders, but all students took the California Achievement Test (CAT) each Spring. Looking at the reading and mathematics results for all four grades in the high school between 1980 and 1985, there were 40 possible changes in scores from one year to the next. Of these, 26 were increases, eight were declines, and six times there was no change. The average reading scores for all four grades increased 1.38 grade points in that five year period. Mathematics scores increased 1.88 grade points during the same time. In 1985 the state removed the district's provisional certification and reduced the frequency of its monitoring of the district.

Conclusion

The Monroe High School story illustrates how a school's culture reflects main currents in national educational thought and some of the difficulties in applying those national ideas when they come into conflict with local conditions. It also suggests some lessons about the relationship between culture and additive change.

The four perspectives expressed by Monroe teachers--the academics, balanced, vocational, and psychological development--reflect distinct populations that American high schools are expected to serve. None of these perspectives dominate locally just as none of these populations dominate in thinking about the comprehensive ideal. The combination of populations and options for them gives the comprehensive high school its egalitarian character. Equity is promoted by placing students in a situation with alternatives and letting each one choose a course of study. This system works because there is a fundamental acceptance of diversity (Powell et al., 1985). This acceptance was well established in Monroe as part of the expectation that teachers would specialize. The idea of specialization was what Schein (1985) calls a deep assumption. It was so taken for granted that it was rarely discussed, but it was so strongly held that it approached the status of the sacred.

Maintaining the comprehensive ideal is difficult at schools like Monroe where the study body does not meet the ideal's assumptions of diversity of achievement. Where students only reflect a limited part of the achievement distribution, they cannot take advantage of the fuller range or offerings that are typically part of the comprehensive menu. The misfit between the national ideal and the specified situation can create strains like the ones seen in Monroe.

This problem was manifest largely in teachers' definitions of who they would include in the school community. Inclusion is important because community members are treated as fellow humans and accorded a level of respect and concern that is not offered to the "outsider" (Schlecty, 1976).

Teachers were most willing to admit students into the community who could help them pursue their own instructional purposes. Since these varied according to one's perspective, some teachers were more inclusive than others. The most exclusive extreme was reached by the academic teachers who would only include "real A students," a vanishing breed in their opinion. Other students were belittled, not accorded the full benefit of those teachers' ability to explain concepts,and in some cases pushed out of the classroom. These teachers continued to be unhappy that there were not enough of the "right kind" of students to allow them to achieve their instructional purposes. Teachers holding other perspectives were generally more inclusive and more satisfied with their work.

The consequences of exclusion can be severe. Cusick (1983) and Powell and colleagues (1985) have documented one consequence for student in the form of the "treaties" or "contracts" between teachers and students where grades are traded for compliant behavior. Examples of such treaties were apparent in Monroe along with such behaviors as failing large numbers of students who did not meet the teacher's standards, diluting the curriculum, cryptic teaching, insulting students, and pushing them out of the classroom. Continuing interaction between teachers and students who "did not fit" within their community also took its psychic toll on teachers.

The comprehensive ideal is a major barrier to building agreement on a delimited set of instructional ends in a high school. Such concentration runs counter to that ideal's fundamental commitment to diversity. Yet, there is evidence that such concentration on basic skills instruction is effective in helping students learn minimum literacy skills (Clark, Lotto,

& McCarthy, 1980; Wellisch, et al., 1978). The Monroe story indicates that recommending a focused set of instructional ends is not just advocacy of technique for instructional improvement; it raises fundamental questions of purpose. When effective schools researchers recommend focused attention to limited purposes, they do so in the name of a particular educational goal: guaranteeing minimal literacy skills to children of the urban poor that equal those of the middle class (Edmonds, 1979). This goal stems from a specific definition of equity based on comparable skills. When high school teachers resist such concentration of effort they do so out of commitment to different instructional ends. They are firmly committed to teaching their specialities and to assumptions of diversity that allow them to continue doing so. These assumptions, although rarely articulated by teachers, are based on a different conception of equity: one based on student choice. In effect, the specialist teachers at Monroe use different criteria for effectiveness than those proposed by the effective schools researchers.

Still, the minimum skills definition of equity is another important current in American educational thought. In the Monroe setting it was not reflected in teacher culture so much as in the state's minimum competency test and in the commitments of district administrators. While these commitments were reinforced by the state test, it would be a mistake to read them as just a cynical effort to cope with external pressure. The administrators' commitment was sincere although they did not always understand the tensions between the comprehensive ideal and the minimum skills objective. That may be why they adopted an additive approach to change that did not encompass cultural change.

Strangely enough, the Monroe improvement program was a success in its own terms. Test scores clearly rose. Students learned more and performed better even if they did not yet meet the standards set by the academic teachers. This measurable improvement is a considerable accomplishment.

At one level the program succeeded because it did not intend to create cultural change. It did not seek to build consensus on the importance of basic skills instruction, nor did it try to convince teachers to develop expectations that all students could learn. Instead it focused on specified formal arrangements and behaviors, and that strategy worked. Its centerpiece was that monitoring procedure which verified that those arrangements and behaviors were in place. The curriculum alignment work and test preparation activity ensured that time was devoted to instruction on what would be tested. The strategy circumvented teachers' beliefs and relied upon formal authority. While teachers were allowed to participate to a certain extent, especially in the design of the curriculum, the fundamental elements of the program were centrally mandated; and the formal evaluation system was used to enforce them. Teachers had little choice about accepting administrative directives about how time should be spent.

While this success was notable, the program did not touch some issues at all. The significant proportion of teachers who would not admit most students into the school community did not change their views. Cryptic teaching, insulting students, and pushing the worst ones out of the class continued. Moreover, the blatant use of authority was widely resented by more teachers than those who wanted to teach "better" students. Because of it, teachers came to exclude administrators from the school community just as many of them excluded most students. In fact the exclusion of administrators was substantially more universal. Tensions surrounding the change program contributed to the formation of a culture of opposition among teachers. The roots of this culture preceded the project, but project implementation contributed to it substantially. This culture created a situation where teachers complied with the letter of those parts of the program that were monitored, but not its spirit. In fact wherever they could, they continued to operate as they had before the project. The project also added to the sense of stress and discomfort of teachers who worked at Monroe. As such, it was a major contributor to teachers' burnout and eagerness to leave.

In sum, while the program reached its stated objectives, it did so at a real cost by ignoring some problems stemming from the teachers' culture and exacerbating others. It can safely be predicted that the program would only continue as long as strong administrators at the top of the district would be willing to enforce it.

CHAPTER FOUR
SOMERVILLE: A SCHOOL FOR GOOD CITIZENS

The story of Somerville is of leadership and the shaping of a school's culture. Although historically a well-regarded school, Somerville experienced turmoil, dissent, and fractiousness during the late 1960s and early 1970s. A crisis of leadership occurred and a new principal came in. This charismatic leader sensed the community's values, the faculty's preferred definitions of schooling, and shaped an institution expressive of an overriding belief that this school--Somerville--should produce decent, capable citizens who are prepared for the world of work. Although some students go on to college and some drop out of school altogether, the dominant culture of Somerville stresses this theme. Somerville, then, defines success as producing good citizens. The role of the leader has been to draw out this deeply held belief, implement procedures and plans that express it, select people who share this belief, and shape school symbols, ceremonies, and rituals to reflect and reinforce the central purpose of the school--to prepare good citizens for the world of work.

The Setting

> "We turn out good kids. Many are able to get good jobs in business or industry. And we have a reputation for that." [14]

Metropolis is a city of neighborhoods. Sometimes ethnic, sometimes religious, always geographic, these neighborhoods are cohesive, tightly-knit, stable, and often quite vocal about things that matter to them. One issue that matters is education. Many neighborhoods in Metropolis demand schools which reflect that neighborhood's values and beliefs--its culture. Local residents feel quite strongly that schools should reflect their beliefs about schooling. When the schools are no longer attuned to local culture, parents and other residents apply pressure to bring them back in line with local expectations. Sometimes pressure is directed towards the principal, sometimes towards teachers, and often towards "The Office," as the central administrative offices are called. Parents have so much clout that a teacher said, "It's easier for a parent to be heard [at The Office] than a teacher." In Metropolis, neighborhoods are listened to.

Schools in the city are expected to conform closely to the community's or larger society's expectations regarding schooling. When they do not, or when those expectations are shifting, ambiguous, and in conflict, schools can suffer a loss of legitimacy: the community or society no longer believes that the schools are doing what they ought to do. An example of loss of legitimacy can be seen in the recent educational reform reports, such as A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) that expressed serious and profound discontent with the structures and processes of schooling. Legislatures have responded by enacting laws that will tighten controls over some aspects of schooling, notably graduation requirements. This loss of legitimacy brings attempts to reform the school to align it more closely with society's or the community's expectations...to create a more acceptable institution.

This chapter is about one of Metropolis' comprehensive high schools that suffered a crisis of legitimacy nearly a decade ago. Since that time, the school has undergone major changes. It has turned around from a school where stories are told of sixteen-year-olds skate-boarding down the hallways to one where boys remove their hats when they enter the building. It has developed from a high school with parents up in arms, "in revolt," as one teacher [24] described it, to one where parental and alumni contributions for sports uniforms, trips, and graduation prizes total tens of thousands of dollars annually.

In the past, community discontent with the school ran high, teachers were apathetic, and the students had license to do as they chose. Parents pressured The Office to somehow provide them with new leadership and, eventually, a new principal was assigned to the school. This chapter tells the story of how that principal went about the complex work of rebuilding both external and internal support for the school. In so doing, he shaped the culture of the school to reflect the values of the community and his own ideals about education. In his words, "The school reflects the community. Some percent are flakes, some percent are thieves, some percent are solid--just like society."

This is the story of one man straddling two worlds, building loyalty within and without, creating positive values and beliefs and a sense of purpose where only disinterest and self-interest lived, and rebuilding a viable and cohesive institution. It is a story of leadership and leading, of power and empowerment, of forging new links with the community, of sensing the pervasive community values and the deeply-held beliefs of the teachers and fostering their expression in the school.

Somerville--The Community and the School

Somerville is a working-class neighborhood. Sitting high atop a ridge of land in the northwestern section of Metropolis, Somerville is economically and socially better off than the poorer neighborhoods that lie below it along the riverbank. Once prosperous by virtue of the large garment industry located here, Somerville residents now work in a variety of occupations. Modest, tidy row homes and twins (semi-detached houses) line the residential sections of the neighborhood. Most homes are beautifully maintained and reflect the care and attention of their owners.

The business sections of Somerville are on Summit Avenue, the main street of the neighborhood. Small businesses and shops line several blocks of the Avenue, with an occasional florist, restaurant, or tavern located two or three blocks off Summit. Near the far end of Somerville's western boundaries (also the western boundaries of Metropolis) is an older shopping center which contains the discount branch of a large department store, a library, a movie theater, and a variety of clothing shops, pet stores, video shops, and drug stores. This shopping center marks the center of Upper Somerville, a sub-section of the neighborhood. When describing where they live, parents underscore Upper, as if this represents higher status than Somerville itself.

The high school sits on Summit Avenue between the main commercial area and the shopping center. The building and grounds occupy one full city block, with the football field located in an adjacent block. The building is a three story red brick classic, built in 1925. The main entrance sports what appears to be a bullet hole in one of the glass doors. These doors open to a majestic, two-story marble entrance hall with mirror-image staircases on either side. Students are not allowed to use these marble stairs for entering or leaving the schools, or for passing between classes.

The entrance hall contains portraits of past principals of the school. When entering, one feels watched over by the individuals who have shaped the school. The second floor (the main floor) landing is decorated with large urns holding the school flag as well as the flag of Philadelphia and the American flag. The current principal organized a ceremony when the former principals' portraits were hung. He invited the first President of the Home and School Association and the President of the first class to graduate from Somerville--the Class of 1907--to that ceremony. They sang the school song without having to read any lyrics.

The school is populated by over 60 full-time regular teachers and over 20 special education teachers. In addition, there are non-teaching assistants, two full-time policemen, custodial staff, cafeteria staff, four guidance counselors, five secretaries, and four administrators. These adults were charged with a variety of responsibilities regarding the 1500 some-odd students who walk through the side entrances every day. Of these 250 are special education students who are bused in from various locations in and around the immediate neighborhood.

Ultimately responsible for the operation of the school is Mr. P, the school's principal. Mr. P is called "the Boss" or "Boss" by several teachers and staff. He is also referred to by his full last name. Most often, however, he is called "Mr. P." A master of rhetoric and politics, Mr. P is a charismatic man who has shaped the school into a coherent institution with a strong culture that emphasizes good citizenship above all else and has powerful links to the community. This chapter is the story of how he has done that. It is told from the perspective of the researcher, as I observed the school, supplemented by the teachers' perspectives, and Mr. P's own actions and words.

A cautionary note is necessary here. High schools are not small organizations. With over 100 teachers, administrators, and support staff, and nearly 1500 students, Somerville is an average-sized high school. To describe a school as having a strong (coherent) culture, most people within the school have to express or agree with a set of core values. This is the case with Somerville, although degrees of commitment to, attachment to, and belief in the leader, the organization, and the cultural value of good citizenship vary.

Three subcultural groups were identified during the research. Two are quite small and vocal while the third consists of the majority of all the teachers. The groups varied in their adherence to the cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions expressed by Mr. P. Closest to him ideologically is a small, tightly-knit core of dedicated teachers and staff who strongly express the school's dominant values and reveal unwavering loyalty to Mr. P as the prime symbol and shaper of those values. This group is quite powerful culturally, socially, and politically, and has over the years developed a strong dedication to Mr. P, to Somerville, and to one another. They gather socially outside of school time, treat themselves to a special deli lunch on payday, and perform myriad chores and tasks associated with the everyday operation of a high school. Like an elite subgroup in any organization, these dedicated loyalists have a name for their group, share daily rituals and common understandings, and through their intense cohesiveness and aura of specialness exclude others. Such exclusion is not consciously deliberate but, just as any clique of friends, has that effect. This group, "the Coterie," is a powerful shaper and maintainer of the school's culture, and their loyalty to Mr. P is profound:

> "[When he came in,] he sensed no rapport between administration and faculty. He set a new ambiance, a new atmosphere." [24]
>
> "Mr [P] is behind us--he will finagle to help us. There are principals who hang you, but not him. He stands behind us." [65]

> "I really think highly of Mr. P--he always looks for the best in people. I think you work harder for someone like that." [76]

> "He knows how to talk and handle people. He knows what to say to whom. He is an expert at that and that's a large part of administration. His presence is commanding." [34]

The second group consists of the majority of the teachers interviewed. These people also believe in and express the dominant values of the school, their respect for Mr. P as an administrator is uniformly high, and they believe in their work. They do not, however, identify with Mr. P closely. They regard the Coterie as a curiosity, an interesting anamoly, that does not affect their working lives profoundly:

> "The clique doesn't bother me. If I can go to him and channels are open, I feel ok. If he had to discuss everything with those people, then I would be upset." [46]

> "You're setting up an elite group. Those people are singled out for favors--for coffee, for special luncheons. He *is* reachable; it's not a question that he's not. When he first came, he won a lot of us over. A lot of us were leery but then this inner group formed. I guess they feel they need extra points." [50]

> "I pretty much do what I'm supposed to do. I guess there's a bit of favoritism but if you've been working with people a long time, you go with the ones you know." [57]

There is also a third group, quite small, who feel unsuited to life at Somerville. Either because of a lack of emphasis on academics or because of burn-out or because of personal feelings against Mr. P, these teachers feel angry or disinterested--they are ready to leave and suggest marginal commitment to the school. Mr. P once referred to these as "the lunatic fringe." Like the unstable neutrons in an atom ring, they are too far from the nucleus to be part of it and are as yet unattached to another organization. One such teacher, relatively new to Somerville, could acknowledge that Mr. P is a strong disciplinarian but expressed anger over the Coterie:

> "[That inner circle] gets all the goodies and I don't believe that's fair. Schools need new blood...They are his people and no one else can break in. They are given the goodies because they've had them for years and because they expect it." [39]

A second described how he saw favors being allocated:

> "He doesn't want any problems with the union. Favors are handed out to the union or to his 'group.' [It's as if he says,] "You wash my hands, I'll wash yours.'" [51]

Thus when describing the dominant values, it should be assumed that there are always degrees of commitment to and expression of these values. But that when viewing the organization holistically, an overall cultural emphasis on good citizenship predominates.

Historical Background

Mr. Dunbar, the principal of Somerville before Mr. P, presided over some of the more turbulent times schools have endured. The early- and mid-1970s were times of racial tension and violence, anti-government demonstrations, and the growing disenchantment of adolescents. Mr. Dunbar, as described by the teachers, was unable to meet these challenges actively. He is seen as a true gentleman, one best suited for life at a boy's prep school: "a gentleman of the old school" [27]. He was accused of never leaving his office to walk the halls of the school and of telling teachers whatever they wanted to hear at the moment and then later reversing what he had said. He invited students to obey rules and to keep the walls clean from graffitti. His philosophy of education stressed consensual decision-making and the non-violent resolution of problems. A courtly man whose leadership style belonged to places of decorum and consensus, Mr. Dunbar was at odds with the Somerville community. During his tenure, discipline eroded to the point that students were playing hockey in the hallways with empty milk cartons. Mothers could not understand why he appeared so two-faced, saying one thing at one time and something else at another. Fathers and local businessmen could not fathom his beliefs in talking things through and his retreats to the sanctuary of his office. They wanted a take-charge man who would set limits on the students, be active in the community, and be one of the boys at the local tavern. And they got one.

Mr. Dunbar was promoted to a position in the central office. Another principal was sent to Somerville but lasted only briefly: he was so disliked by the community that he had to leave. A teacher described this as, "The parents couldn't stand him so they dug up some dirt on him and he was out" [5]. A couple of months into the school year, Mr. P finally arrived.

> "This guy [P] won the Home and School [the parents' association] over in a week--no nonsense." [34]

A product of Metropolis schools, a local man from a similarly strong neighborhood, Mr. P sensed the atmosphere and knew what had to be taken care of first: discipline. Parents were outraged that students had been allowed to get away with so much and demanded action. For Mr. P the first order of business was order:

> "[When I first came,] the parents were in revolt...My philosophy is that I think our teachers are the pros. They need the proper environment to teach in: it should be free of distractions and conducive to learning. My job, and the disciplinarians' job, is to remove someone disrupting class. Get the clown out. That doesn't help the clown, but it does help the others. Then you have the counselors deal with the clown."

> "We take care of discipline. We believe in the axiom that no child has the right to interfere with another child's right to an education. If they want to commit educational suicide, that's bad

> enough and we feel sorry. But educational homicide we won't tolerate."

Establishing discipline in Somerville High School was not achieved by focusing only on student behavior. Mr. P believed that "you've got to give the kids something to believe in, something to care about." Thus, in the process of rebuilding school spirit and establishing a discipline code and procedures to follow it up, Mr. P embarked on a voyage of shaping the school's culture--as expressed in symbols and behaviors--to be more in tune with community values and his own ideals about education. Although regaining control over student behavior played a large part in his efforts, he also shaped the culture of the school, building it into a more coherent organization that emphasized the values of respect, work, and individual integrity.

Shaping a Culture: Embedding and Reinforcing the Central Themes

When Mr. P arrived the school's culture expressed an unclear mission and goals; student behaviors in conflict with parents, other community groups, and teachers; fractionated and apathetic teachers, and few rituals and ceremonies supporting commitment to the school. Mr. P transformed that culture. To do so, he attended to its content--the norms, beliefs, and values--and its means of expression. Mr. P promoted three strong values that have defined the overall mission of the school as developing good citizens. These were that students should behave properly, that they should learn skills for the world of work, and that the school should be a community where people are known. Thus the dominant cultural themes stress proper behavior, the value of work and a belief in the individual, all striving to achieve the overarching mission of the school: to produce responsible, loyal citizens.

Cultural values are expressed, refined, and embedded through a variety of media. Leaders signal that certain values are more important than others as they conduct the everyday business of the organization. First, in selecting key personnel and allocating rewards and status, leaders define what matters. Second, in what they pay attention to, control, and measure, leaders stress what they care about and believe in. And third, in shaping the symbolic aspects of the organization--its rituals, ideologies, language, stories, and myths--the leader emphasizes and reinforces the dominant values. Mr. P used all these mechanisms to express and extend a set of dominant values, thereby building a strong culture. This development requires loyalty, commitment, and involvement in the social life of the organization. Such bonding to the institution stresses conformity to standards governing behaviors that are expressed in both the symbolic and substantive aspects of everyday life. Mr. P used substance and symbol to promote and reinforce the emerging official values of the school.

Selecting and Rewarding

In embedding cultural values that define an overall belief in good citizenship, Mr. P acknowledges, underscores, and describes the importance of having the right people in critical roles. When he arrived at Somerville, poor discipline was the first problem he addressed. It was essential that he design policies and procedures and reinforce them consistently; it was also essential that he assign responsibility for carrying out those policies and procedures to people who would do the job--people who could be trusted to be loyal.

> "There's one thing I will take credit for is putting the right person in the right job. I have some discretion in that, [although] it's negotiated with the Union. On some jobs, I'll give the union seniority; but in key positions, I want my people. I negotiate with the union. [The Superintendent] does it on a large scale, I do it on a smaller scale."

If they were a little tougher than Mr. P himself would be, that was OK, too, because then Mr. P himself would not be directly associated with this tough approach. Moreover, providing some balance between tough and sympathetic would be ideal.

Today, this balance prevails and is expressed as an overall feeling of "tough love." Discipline is carried out by a hand-picked core of loyalists led by a Dean of Students who is responsible for the conduct of the discipline room--Room 103. A self-effacing sympathetic man who has lived in the community for decades, he is unswervingly loyal to Mr. P, serves as his right hand man, and calls Mr. P "Padrone." When called upon to mediate a dispute, handle a fight, or calm down an upset child, the Dean enters the fracas with an aura of calm control, removes the student from the situation and begins to talk with him or her softly, gently, and sympathetically. He represents the "love," and cares deeply about most of the students at Somerville:

> Shouts are heard outside the discipline room by five or six friends. Mr. O'Malley walks in, takes the girl over to a bench, asks her to sit down, while telling her friends to go back to their classes. He talks to the girl softly:
> "What happened?"
> "Do you know this girl [the one who started the fight]?"
> "Do you live near her? have classes with her?"
> The girl is pretty upset but can tell her side of the story. Mr. O'Malley asks her:
> "Do you want to go home? see the nurse?"

> The other girl is brought in by one of the disciplinarians. Mr. O'Malley talks to both, trying to find out what went on. He turns to me and says, "It was 'he say I say' or a 'she say I say' type of dispute." He shrugs his shoulders...The girls are suspended but with some TLC. [Field notes]

He is assisted by three teachers who are disciplinarians part-time and teach a reduced roster as a result. The nucleus is a pair of tough, conservative men who are disciplinarians, coaches, and teachers, in that order. They value their discipline work and their coaching highly. Teaching appears to be secondary in their everyday school lives. Zealous in their work as disciplinarians, these two are on the alert whenever they are on duty in Room 103. On a moment's notice they jump into action to apprehend a class cutter, a smoker, a druggie, a fighter, or a "head case," as a disturbed student might be called.

These two describe discipline as "not bad" now, but when Mr. P came in it was terrible. As one said about Mr. P's arrival, "If that was Hell, this is Heaven" [7]. They must deal with chronic problems like cutting class and school, as well as the more exciting occasional fights or suspected drug dealings. Chronic class cutters are given a Daily Attendance Report which must be signed by each teacher each period and handed in at the beginning of the next day when a new one is issued. Suspensions occur quite regularly. For chronic cutting, for talking back to a teacher, for the more serious offense of fighting, the student is quite automatically suspended. With a parent in tow, the student can be reinstated right away. And after five days, even without a parent, the student will be automatically reinstated.

The discipline team often goes out of their way to help out. One said that "Kids really need the discipline, I believe," and then tried hard to help out a student whose grades had slipped recently:

> Mr. Williams gets a phone call from a parent. Apparently it's about a student (the parent's kid) who used to be a good student but has slipped. Mr. Williams offered to meet with the parent,get out all the kid's records, talk with the kid's teachers to find out what's going on with the child. [Field notes]

The prevailing emphasis on discipline is reflected by the teachers who value how Mr. P has taken care of order. They feel, for the most part, that they are backed up in discipline. They always get some action when they refer a student to Room 103:

> "He'll back you up; his main thing is discipline." [26]
>
> "The students know they won't be trifled with." [54]
>
> "If it's something serious--fighting or a drug bust--the disciplinarian will rush it through to the principal. Why? Well, number one, he considers discipline a top priority in the school; and number two, by inclination or experience, he gets involved directly." [13]
>
> "Now I had two pink slips already today...I had two girls in Advisory who didn't want to fill out a form so rather than me fighting with them, I sent them to [103] and they filled out the forms there. They [the disciplinarians] back you up on anything." [45]
>
> "This is a blue-collar neighborhood--it's tough. And the kids learn that at home, so you have to show them that you are tough. _Then_ you can be delicate with them...You don't have to be big or a man. _That's_ the magic. How the hell does one person, just with the lift of an eyebrow, show that this is the situation? [Mr. P] does that. He anticipates, he's a very astute fellow." [52]

Mr. P provides daily examples of how discipline should be handled--examples to his discipline team, to other teachers, and of course to the students. There had been a fire in one of the vocational education speciality areas the day before. Mr. P went down to talk to the class:

> Mr. P takes over the class to explain what they're going to do. He says, "We won't punish even though the kids were fooling around. We will educate because that's what schools are all about...I am part

> angry and part proud--angry as hell and proud of you all at the same time." [Field notes]

Apparently the students had reacted perfectly once the fire broke out. They had observed safety procedures, used the right equipment to put out the fire, and called for help. Mr. P let them know they had been both foolish and responsible!

Some teachers, however, have concerns. A few feel the suspension system is abused. It doesn't work to modify a child's behavior; instead, it removes him or her from school. Three teachers feel there should be some alternative way of handling both chronic and acute problems. One suggested an in-house detention system or special program:

> "I would like to see something done other than suspensions. It doesn't really help the student--it gives them a vacation. I like in-house suspensions. At another school, all the teachers gave the student work to do in the in-house suspension room. I think the suspension system is the worst in the world. It's crazy to have a system where the student can bring himself back." [46]

Another concern comes from one of the special education teachers who feels that special education students are treated more harshly than regular students when sent to Room 103:

> "Their policies for special ed and discipline are not good. They concur with the disciplinarians and back them up. Once they know a student is special ed, they ride him." [61]

There are conflicting views on discipline. For the most part, however, teachers feel backed up and value this highly.

Paying Attention

A second powerful mechanism leaders use to shape and maintain cultural values is simply to pay attention to those desired behaviors. By paying attention, controlling, and measuring certain behaviors, the leader signals how important they are.

In addition to emphasizing a strong, consistent, yet moderately tolerant discipline system, Mr. P stresses the more daily aspects of proper behavior: proper dress, respect for elders, and manners. Although a formal dress code cannot be enforced in a high school (because of what staff refer to as the Student Bills of Rights), there are strong suggestions about what is acceptable and unacceptable. As the weather turned warm in the spring, a "suggested" dress code was written and delivered to each advisory. Some teachers taped them to their classroom doors. Students should not wear shorts, crop tops, fish net shirts, mini-skirts, and so on. When any of these appeared, teachers and administrators alike raised an eyebrow or scolded the student gently but firmly, sending the message that the clothing was unacceptable.

Respect and proper manners are reinforced daily as Mr. P tours the halls and greets students, suggesting to one to remove his hat, or to another that he inquire how someone is. He also underscores to teachers how crucial this is. In the conference room one day, a teacher approached Mr. P with a question or two. Mr. P seized that opportunity to call the teacher's attention to a student's behavior and to make clear how he (Mr. P) expected the teacher to behave, as well. There had been an incident with a boy on the team which the teacher coached. Reports had reached Mr. P that the boy had cursed at the teacher [34]. He probed to discover if, in fact, the child had cursed:

Mr. P: Did [the kid] curse at you?
Teacher: I didn't hear him curse.
Mr. P: Are you sure he didn't?

Teacher: No, I didn't hear him.
Mr. P: Because I heard that he did.
Teacher: Nope. Like I said, I didn't hear him curse.
Mr. P: Good. Then I won't pursue it. Because I was sure that if he had cursed in front of you, he wouldn't be playing on the team now.

The value of proper behavior, demeanor, respect for others is conveyed in myriad ways throughout the everyday life of the school. From dress code to discipline code, from a vigorous discipline team to school ceremonies, students are taught that discipline, behavior, and orderliness are highly valued. As Mr. P observed, "I want them to act like good kids; I don't care how smart they are."

In addition to emphasizing proper behavior, Mr. P wants his students to leave school equipped for the world of work. Set in a working-class neighborhood where attendance at college is unusual (only 10-12% of the graduating class goes on to some form of postsecondary education), the high school's overarching mission is to prepare students for work. The business education department is the largest in the school, with the exception of special education. Business Ed's programs are thorough, comprehensive, and varied and it has evolved over the years as the single most important department in the school.

The department offers courses that range from Typing 1 to Advanced Bookkeeping and cover Office Practice, Shorthand, Word-Processing, and so on. The "heavier" vocational courses such as auto shop, woodworking, and machine shop are separate from Business Ed. Students enroll in the courses on an elective basis which is currently creating some tension both within the school and in all the comprehensive high schools, as a result of a new state-mandated graduation requirements.

The new requirements stipulate an additional two years of science, one of math, and one of social studies. These additions to the already-required one year of science, two of math, two of social studies, four of English, and four of physical education and health reduce significantly the number of elective students can take. One teacher indicated that, "With the various requirements, we have 16 out of 21. That leaves only five electives and students need about 8--two or three a year--to get adequate skills." [10]

In the spring, members of the Business Ed department were struggling with the implication of this for their survival, viability, curriculum, and relationship with other departments. At a special committee meeting, three business teachers [3, 38, 47] discussed how the new requirements will reduce the students' flexibility in selecting courses and that they favor the college-bound. Since so few of Somerville's students attend college, their concerns focused on the majority of the students--those who need business electives to learn skills that will help them get jobs. The recently appointed department head described the requirements as:

> "...short-sighted. Not every student needs academic preparation. Other skills are necessary for students who are [then] fully prepared to go on to work...[One unusual thing at Somerville] is the acceptance and enthusiasm of other people for the Business department. In some schools, the principal feels he should have an 'academic school,' regardless of the skills of the students." [10]

Concern was also expressed about the substitution of, for example, business math for regular math and business English for regular English. This will continue, under the new requirements, although students will be able to substitute only one English and one math course. This substitution practice has not gone unnoticed by the math department which sees the need to entice students back into its offerings. Because the Business Ed department does such a masterful job of marketing its programs and courses to the students, some math teachers feel they must respond. They must try to retain students in their own classes, keeping them from substituting Business Math for regular math.

The Business Ed department receives Mr. P's full support and approval. With a stable community, today's students are tomorrow's local businessmen and Mr. P is ever-conscious of the need to foster and retain the community's support. However, the recent graduation requirements threaten Business Ed. With tighter requirements, there is less room in a student's roster for electives. If enrollments go down, there might be cutbacks in the department. Mr P laments this turn of events:

> "Business Ed will also be hurt but they will fight it. And we have kids in shop--they have shop for three hours a day. What will happen to them? [And] they can't cut out any frills--there aren't any left! Typing isn't a frill--that's a life survival skill."

Across the school, teachers' perspectives on their work emphasized responding to the needs of individual students rather than teaching from some discipline-defined set of standards. They pay attention to the student and his or her uniqueness, rather than the precepts of a particular academic subject area.

In describing their work, the teachers emphasize the individual child and meeting his or her needs, so each one would derive something useful for general citizenship and for the world of work. One teacher [24] developed that idea as follows:

> Q: "Now let's talk about you. What are your goals when you teach?"
>
> A: "I'm not teaching [subject]; I'm teaching the kids. It's a multi-goaled theory because each kid doesn't have the same aspirations, goals, or ability. It depends on each child.

> There are several hundred kids I keep in touch with. You can't see them as clones; each on will take what you say differently."

Accommodating to the individual was also expressed by a Business Ed teacher [3] who described two situations where individual adjustments had to be made to meet an employer's needs. In one, a co-op student was needed for a whole month straight (rather than one week at work, one week at school) because a secretary was sick. The teacher described that they were able to adjust the student's roster so there wouldn't be any problems. In a second incident, the employer needed the student to begin a job at the end of May rather than a couple of weeks later after graduation. Once again, the teacher believed they would be able to accommodate to the needs of the employer and the desires of the student.

Roster changes at Somerville also reflect a deep commitment to meeting the needs of the individual child. Although not a large high school, Somerville ranks quite high in the absolute number of roster changes made each year. Teachers feel this is valuable and the way things should be. Said one,

> "That's one of the values of [Somerville]. We have a lot of roster changes but that means we can accommodate to the child." [25]

Moreover, roster changes are made quite late in the school year if they make sense for the student. One day late in February, one of the four guidance counsellors approached an administrator with a problem. The student involved had requested a roster change in December, but the request had not been acted on. Apparently it had gotten misplaced somewhere along the approval route. The administrator suggested that the counsellor get the department head's approval; if he approved it, the administrator would go along, too. The department head happened to enter the main office just then.

When he heard what had happened, he said "No problem," signed the change form, and commented on what a shame it was for the student to have to wait so long. [14]

Other sorts of problems are often resolved to the benefit of the student. One incident involved an apparent senior, "apparent" because the problem arose as to whether or not she had the proper credits to graduate. In April, with graduation only two months away, it was discovered that this girl might not be eligible to graduate. She had bounced around from school to school--a private school, a magnet high school, and finally had landed at Somerville in their Alternative Program, a structure designed for students who need more support and unity in their daily lives than the typical high school student. Described as an art major and a "neat kid," the girl had been in a senior advisory all year and had been led to believe she would graduate. She had paid her class dues which cover prom, graduation, and yearbook expenses.

Mr. P was furious at the snafu because he promises all the students that anyone who is in a senior advisory will graduate. The girl was in an Alternative Program advisory, passing all her courses, and on all the graduation lists. Mr. P exclaimed that he could not tell her, in April, that she was not going to graduate, but he was very angry at whoever let her slip through with questionable credits.

The roster chairman was called in to verify the credit transfer procedures. A thoroughly well-organized and precise man, he demonstrated how he had transferred the credits from the girl's other schools and that they were adequate for graduation. Had her credits been just under the required number, Mr. P would have resolved the problem in the student's favor.

Mr. P also moves among the students and the faculty to break down the anonymity that can exist in high schools. Each day he walks all the hallways of the school[1], greeting teachers, picking up the odd piece of trash, noting where the plaster is peeling. Teachers and students see him, know he is there, and he sees them. He especially tries to make the students feel known and cared for. The hockey team had been raising money for two years to attend a major tournament in England. The day before they left, although he had been quite ill, Mr. P came to school especially to wish them well, urge them to conduct themselves in ways that would reflect well on the school, the city, and the country.

Thus, proper behavior, preparation for the world of work, and a commitment to the individual are the themes expressing an overall thrust towards good citizenship at Somerville. These values are congruent with the local culture of the community, the belief systems of the teachers, and expressive of the principal's strengths as a leader and his ideals about education. The value of Mr. P has been his unflagging commitment to the school, *his* school, and to the shaping and maintaining of these predominant values.

Shaping the Symbolic

The cultural leader is also a master of the symbolic. Often with heightened self-awareness, the leader sends messages, chooses language, shapes rituals and ceremonies, and subtly influences discourse to further define and embed the preferred values. Mr. P sensed this role as symbolic culture-bearer and developed it to a fine art.

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[1] A recent illness has cut down the frequency of these walks.

When Mr. P arrived at Somerville, halls were barren, the large display case outside the main office was empty, and bulletin boards were engraved with messages from one infatuated teen-ager to another. One of Mr. P's efforts was to take students' natural energy and channel it positively:

> "Kids have a natural energy and we have to channel it in the right ways - into caring about the school. [But] in order for us to make the kids think the school is important, we've got to convince them its good and for that to happen, I've got to think it's good."

Symbols evoking a sense of Somerville as a place with a history and traditions were found, discovered, and created. Suggestions that Somerville was unique and students attending it were special cropped up all over.

The inscribed bulletin boards were artistically painted with scenes of high school life, science fiction ideas, or sports events. These were all done by a student quite talented in art. The display case in the main hall was opened and cleaned. From back closets came trophies of past championships and awards granted to the school by local civic organizations and businesses. These were cleaned and placed in the case along with photos of the administrators and a composite of all the members of the graduating class. Just above this case, hanging from the ceiling are banners bearing the names of colleges. When a student enrolls in a college that no other Somerville graduate has attended, he or she brings back a banner to be hung along with the others.

The principal's office contains memorabilia given to him over the past seven years: caricatures done by local cartoonists, humorous saying engraved on plaques, quotes from famous men such as Vince Lombardi, and the like. The overwhelming impression, however, is of Indians, and not surprisingly: Somerville's mascot is an Indian. This symbol appears in many places throughout the school, for example on the class buttons designed each year by the Junior class and selected by vote as their official class button. Mr P resurrected this symbol and infused it with new life.

Just down the hall from the main office is the ROOT Board - the one bulletin board not decorated by the student-artist. ROOT is an acronym that stands for the Royal Order of the Tomahawk. The acronym heads the top of the bulletin board and underneath a construction-paper rendition of an Indian carrying a tomahawk are students' names. Being selected for the ROOT Board is an honor conferred on students who have made some unusual and outstanding contribution to the school community. Selected nearly every week, these are not honor society members or well-known athletes or excellent scholars; instead, these are students who provide assistance in the office, help community members, or organize fund-raising for a charitable cause. At the end of the school year, all the ROOT Board students and their families are invited to a tea where their contributions are publically acknowledged and appreciated by the school's administrators.

Mornings at Somerville have a predictable quality to them. The main office has a long (25') counter separating the doors to the hallway, a bulletin board or two, and the teachers' mailboxes from the five secretaries' desks. To either side are a conference room (which opens into Mr. P's office) and one of the vice principal's offices. Each morning, teacher and staff sign-in sheets are spread on the large counter. Next to the counter is a four-shelved bookcase on rollers containing the roll books for each advisory, or "Book," as the homerooms are called. As a teacher arrives, he or she signs in, takes his or her her advisory roll book (if they have one - not all do), chats with other teachers, the administrators, or the occasional student in the office area.

As teachers take their roll books and as 8:30 am approaches, the person overseeing this process begins to list those teachers who might be late or absent and have advisories that need coverage and to notify those teachers assigned floating coverage for that day where they will go. Thus advisories are covered, students are not left unsupervised, and teacher absences and lateness are noted. As Mr. P remarks, "This is a well-controlled high school."

Graduation ceremonies are an example of how Mr. P carefully shapes the direction of an event and the messages it sends. At the June graduation ceremony, more time was spent reading the list of students who had perfect or near-perfect attendance throughout high school and junior high school than in reading the scholarships for postsecondary education. And in his speech the principal observed that "even more important than the three Rs, the Class of 1985 has learned the three Cs--caring, commitment, and community." Although Mr. P himself does not actually plan or rehearse the students for the ceremony, he has, over the years, developed a closely-knit, cohesive group of loyal supporters on whom he can count to perform important tasks to his standards. Several of these people have key roles in planning for and overseeing the graduation ceremonies. The music teacher not only conducts the choir but he also rehearses the graduates in how they will march, file into the bleachers, stand, remove their caps, replace them, sit during the ceremony, and leave the bleachers. These procedures are so thoroughly and carefully practiced that when signalled to remove their caps, all right arms move simultaneously in a series of three gestures.

The speeches and speakers are also carefully selected, rehearsed, and presented to the public. At Somerville, the valedictorian does not necessarily either write or give the graduation address. Instead, two competitions are conducted by the English department--one for the two best speeches, and one for three speakers. One speaker presents at Class Day; the other two give the two graduation speeches. The speakers are selected by a team of the principal, the vice principals, and the head of the English department. Students are coached by their English teachers and all try out on a single day using the same material. Conducted in the auditorium, each trial is scored by the committee members. When all are done, the committee retires to the principal's office where, through a process of averaging the scores and weighing other considerations (as a bi-racial school, having one white and one black student would be thoughtful), the selections are made. These students then rehearse the speeches they will give, with attention to timing, intonation, clarity, and expression. The result is that on graduation night, the speeches are smoothly delivered, contributing to an overall impression of attention to detail, polish, and concern that the image presented should be one of decorum.

Other events have ceremonial qualities, although none have quite the same degree of public performance that the graduation ceremony has. An example of this second type of ceremony was the first meeting of a junior varsity athletic team. At a specified time just as school ended (for most students), interested students met in an unused classroom. The coach began by reciting how that team had a winning record for six of the last eight years, that the

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

The study of culture has been linked to two recurring practical issues in the study of schools. The first is how to change schools in a purposeful manner. The stories of Westtown, Monroe, and Somerville provide the basis for a grounded theory of culture and change that specifies some of the general considerations raised in Chapter One. The second issue concerns the relationship between culture and effectiveness, and returns to the question of how to change cultures which define effectiveness in particular ways. The three cases suggest that imposed definitions of effectiveness must resonate with local definitions to create abiding cultural change.

Toward a Theory of Culture and Change

The stories of these three high schools support six statements, three of which describe characteristics of professional cultures and three of which propose relationships between culture and change.

Statement 1: A professional culture, the set of shared expectations about what is and what ought to be, derives from both the more distant external environment common to most schools and the local setting.

Numerous educational observers have commented on the conditions of schooling and the occupation of teaching that have made educational practice remarkably similar from generation to generation and community to community. According to these accounts, neither time nor place greatly affects teacher sentiments about their occupation (Lortie, 1975), instructional supervisory practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), boredom and time spent waiting (Jackson, 1968), student achievement (Coleman, 1966), or organizational structure (Miles, 1981). Yet other authors have devoted their attention to spelling out the variations within and among schools, including organizational structure across schools (Schlechty, 1976), organizational structure between levels (Herriott & Firestone, 1984), departmental structure within schools (Wilson & Corbett, 1983), and student achievement (Rutter et al., 1979; Brookover, 1979). The lines of inquiry are not contradictory. Rather, the issue is one of figure and ground. From one perspective sameness overwhelms; from the other, variation is striking.

From a cultural perspective, it is important to distinguish between two types of norms that coexist in schools: universal and local norms. Universal norms, borrowing from Williams' (1970) discussion, are those that are shared by most members of a group--in this instance an occupational group. They derive from the commonalities that surround anticipatory socialization, actual induction, and eventual practice in the occupation. Thus, common denominators buttress definitions of what the occupation is and ought to be. However, one practices the occupation in a particular community, in a particular building, and in a specialized department where the constant interaction of rules, roles, and relationships generates more idiosyncratic views of what is true and good. The mix of universal and local norms that come to be known about and adhered to, then, help define the culture in individual settings.

The contribution of occupation-wide and setting-specific definitions are demonstrated in Westtown, Monroe, and Somerville. Westtown and Somerville seem more dominated by local norms where instructional practice is concerned although in talking to teachers at the schools, one also hears comments about the way school life is and should be that reiterate themes heard nationwide. Definitions of teaching at Monroe are the product of individuals' induction into the occupation, especially their induction into their own speciality. Teachers' frustrations arise when their perceptions of students' achievement and expressed attitudes towards school do not fit the assumptions about school that underlie those definitions. Monroe's dramatic transformation from a school where students had a wide range of demonstrated achievement to one with a more skewed distribution punctuated the discrepancy between national expectations and local conditions. The influence of the local setting at Somerville is seen quite dramatically in definitions of the purpose of schooling and the proper relationships among staff and students; instruction has been less affected. The point is that the culture of each school is made up of universal themes interpreted in light of local events and conditions; this mix defines the important expectations for each school and gives it its unique character.

Statement 2: Schools vary not only according to the content of the norms held but also according to the uniformity of the professional culture, i.e., the extent to which norms are widely known and adhered to.

The discussion of Statement 1 illustrates how the content of the norms can and are likely to vary from school to school. Equally important to understand is that the degree to which these norms are widely shared can also vary. School cultures, then, are different in their uniformity.

Westtown appeared to have the most uniform professional culture. Not only were most norms shared by most teachers, but also there were not clearly identifiable subgroups that valued behavior contrary to the widely held norms. The case study noted some divergent views, but these did not challenge the core tenets and were individually held. Indeed, those with divergent perspectives usually described themselves or were observed to be isolates. Somerville's culture had its central tenets, but they were distributed differently from those in Westtown. Expression and reinforcement of norms about preparing students to be productive citizens was most evident in the behavior of the leader and was mirrored by teacher subgroups to varying extents with the Coterie most adherent and those at the fringes the least. Faculty acceptance of the norms and devotion to the charismatic leader was patterned in a series of concentric circles. Monroe's culture was the most diverse. The case description portrays a faculty that agreed to disagree on its views of appropriate teaching. These differences led to variation in acceptance of new practices. There was more uniformity in expectations for appropriate teacher-administrator relationships.

The above discussion indicates the importance of subcultures within schools. As Chapter One notes, an organizational culture is not monolithic. A group or groups within a school may hold definitions of what is and what ought to be that are different from other groups in the school. The presence of subcultures may reflect a number of conditions. There may be a single deviant subculture in opposition to a strong central culture; there may be one or more divergent subcultures as a result of the failure of the central culture to carry a quality of obligation that guides the actions of others; or the presence of several groups with different beliefs about some central point may be expected, even called for, by dominant assumptions in the central culture. These possible patterns illustrate the importance of avoiding the "holistic fallacy" or expectation that a school culture is uniformly held.

Statement 3: Not only can the uniformity of norms vary within schools but also norms vary as to the extent that they are perceived by staff members to be alterable.

This statement points to the sacred and profane characteristics of norms that were introduced in Chapter Two. The alterability of norms is independent of the uniformity with which they are held. That is, profane norms can be widely accepted as definitions of what is true and good and yet group members can be open to changing these expectations for behavior; group members cannot even conceive of alternatives to sacred norms, much less of changing them. Nevertheless, it may be that only a small group in the total population holds a norm in this regard.

To illustrate, from all available evidence, the tenet of the classroom as the capitol at Westtown was uniformly held and sacred; it was both accepted by almost all faculty members and immutable. At Somerville, the expectation that the purpose of the high school was to produce good citizens was sacred to the principal and his Coterie to be sure, but other staff members, while accepting it, did not view this as the only possible definition of schooling. And, for a few, this was clearly not the best possible alternative. Thus, the norm was widely shared and yet its sacred quality was upheld mostly by what might be called the "high priest" and the close circle of believers. The norms that were most sacred and compelling to teachers at Monroe were often held by a subgroup. For instance, teachers holding the academic perspective persisted in teaching a college prep curriculum for over a decade in spite of evidence that students were failing that curriculum and did not benefit from it and pressure from administrators to adjust to a changing clientele.

An additional note is that the essential character of cultural norms in a school, their uniformity and their sacredness, may not be attributes that staff can verbalize easily. To use the term introduced in Chapter Three, they are deep assumptions. Indeed, expectations at Westtown and Monroe did not appear to be recognized consciously until a challenge to them arose (e.g., the new administrative philosophy toward discipline at Westtown and underlying commitment to specialization at Monroe). Thus, threats can establish what the normative boundaries are--the limits to what is acceptable as true and good. To say that norms are widely shared or not subject to tampering is not to say that staff are conscious of these boundaries.

Statement 4: The aversity of staff reaction to change varies with the character of the norms challenged and the newness of the challenge.

Aversity means more than resistance, a term that implies behavioral opposition. Adopting an adversarial posture may be an overtly dramatic response to change, but aversity means more than that. It means distaste, and repugnance; it conjures up an image of an emotional, deeply felt reaction. Thus, aversity includes mental and physical health implications of a change attempt as well.

This type of response seems reserved for change efforts that tamper with sacred norms. Culture seems to be most conservative with those sets of expectations. This statement can be supported best with data from the Westtown case, but the case is interesting because it enables the examination of the same group's reactions to three different sets of changes, which in turn varied with the extent to which they challenged an apparently sacred norm. The emotional and physical accompaniments to opposition were clearly tied to threats to the classroom as capitol. For the moment, staff could distinguish among their responses to Madeline Hunter, accountability, and discipline related changes.

At Monroe norms that were sacred to subcultures had been under attack for over a decade as a result of changes in the student body, special programs, and administrative turnover. The level of aversity was somewhat, but only somewhat, lower than at Westtown because teachers had developed ways to cope. Some of these were individual adaptations that allowed them to comply with the most observable portions of innovations--like the schedules in the QTPs--and still do the things they found fundamentally important to their perspectives of good teaching. Others were cultural modifications like the belief that administrators and their programs come and go but teachers remain; the community boundaries excluded administrators. The sacred norms themselves also changed, taking on a rigid quality as they were defended against all odds. One can speculate that the sacred norms were more elastic until seriously challenged.

The comparison of Westtown and Monroe suggests a natural history of how attacks to sacred norms are handled in schools. Aversiveness is strongest early in the process while the attacks are fresh. If these attacks are not reversed, some people will leave. Others will develop ways to stay in the situation and continue to do what they consider to be fundamental. These will include strategic compliance and the erection of defenses against the attackers. The result will be a culture of opposition that will provide some comfort for those who remain, but the level of enthusiasm apparent in Westtown a few years ago will be difficult to regain.

Statement 5: Behavioral change is possible through frequent communication of new definitions of what is and ought to be and close enforcement of those expectations.

Monroe teachers, many of them at least, changed their behavior despite expressed opposition. The reasons for this can be traced to the supervisory changes accompanying the mandated change, increased monitoring, and the repetition of the required behavioral changes over the last few years. Staff knew what was expected, and they regularly came into contact with administrators in such a way that behavior related to the program was visible. The Somerville principal achieved the same results, although the particular strategies he used are more difficult to retrieve. Nevertheless, reconstructions of the formative period suggest that the principal's view of what schooling should be were reiterated constantly in action and comments to staff. Continual reinforcement of this view is still in place, given more through informal encouragement than formal supervision and through ceremony than evaluative conferences. Based on those two experiences, one would expect successful implementation of Madeline Hunter techniques at Westtown. The "buzz words" are constantly mentioned and formal evaluation will begin to take note of whether the related practices indeed show up in the classroom.

These cases fit well with the literature on socialization, i.e., the process through which a neophyte becomes acquainted with the definitions of what is and ought to be that obtain in a group. Numerous research studies describe the highly interactive process through which behavior becomes shaped (e.g., Brim & Wheeler, 1966; Simpson, 1979; Bucher & Stelling, 1977). The discussion of Williams (1970) in Chapter Two also highlights the fact that a culture's normative system is defined not only by the knowledge of and adherence to norms but also by the processes of transmitting and enforcing them.

Statement 6: Behavioral change is a preliminary to cultural change but it does not insure acceptance of desired norms.

Cultural change is the acceptance or internalization of new definitions of what is and what ought to be. A considerable body of research suggests that attitudes follow from behavior (Breer & Locke, 1965; Fullan, 1985) so behavioral change is probably a preliminary to cultural change. However, behaviors are like symbols in one crucial respect: the meaning is not inherent in the thing itself (Eliade, 1959). Instead, meaning is socially constructed through collective interpretative process.

Where the change in question is planned--or at least part of a conscious effort--the extent to which the cultural change is in the intended direction will depend on both the interpretative activities of the leaders of the change and available elements in the culture to be modified. Here the most telling comparison is between Somerville and Monroe. At Somerville, Mr. P embarked upon a transformative change effort designed to modify the school's culture. This modification was in fact an intensification of themes that already had a sacred quality to both faculty and the community. Through his own statements and manipulations of symbols as diverse as the ROOT Board and the graduation ceremony, he clarified existing values of the importance of order, citizenship, decency, and preparation for the world of work. The new culture reflected and institutionalized this intended direction of change.

The superintendent in Monroe district initiated an additive change process where attitudinal changes would be welcomed but were secondary to behavioral change. The intent of this change--improvement of student test scores and basic skills achievement--was contrary to deeply held values of many teachers. They argued that such improvement was not part of their job. The means used violated teachers' understandings of the complexities of classroom life and appropriate administrative-teacher behavior. Moreover, the school's culture already provided interpretations for this sort of behavior--administrators come and go, they do not understand us--that allowed teachers to adopt specific behaviors without internalizing the values intended to go with them.

The complexities of the process of interpreting behavioral change highlights and elaborates one of the major themes in research on planned change in education: that it is context-specific (Berman, 1981; Corbett, Dawson, & Firestone, 1984). The same change is likely to be implemented in different ways and modified in different directions from setting to setting because of important but sometimes subtle differences in the local culture. In effect, the meaning of the change must be reconstructed at each location, and that reconstruction will be shaped substantially by local understandings about the appropriate means and ends of education.

Of course not all behavioral changes lead to cultural change. Cultural change is most likely to happen under two conditions. First, the behavioral change challenges existing norms and values. The Madeline Hunter program at Westtown required behavioral changes but was congruent with the local belief that the classroom is the capitol so no new definitions of teaching were needed. All other examples of changes in this study, however, did implicate the existing culture either by challenging it, as in the case of Westtown's discipline policy, or by building coherence in it as happened at Somerville. Second, cultural change requires time. The changes that took place at Somerville had been institutionalized after seven years. Those at Monroe took two years to work out. At Westtown normative conflict remained after two and a half years.

The well-noted lack of continuation of many educational changes is most likely a telling comment on the tenuous connection between behavioral and cultural change. The disappearance of an innovation after the removal of special support for it says that the internalization of expectations for behavior has not occurred or, as was the case at Monroe, the norms internalized were not ones that would maintain the behavioral changes once special emphasis disappeared. The literature on continuation points directly to the importance of incentives, time for learning, and the institutionalization of rules, procedures, and evaluation as mechanisms to promote lasting change (Corbett, Dawson, & Firestone, 1984; Huberman & Miles, 1984). Listing these elements is another way of specifying the kind of interaction that supports new behavior and contributes to the development of a congruent culture. Where changes are not institutionalized, they do not "fit" the existing expectations. In such instances, the difference between behavior and cultural change becomes the difference between a momentary aberration and lasting change.

Culture and Effectiveness

Recent research in education and business suggests that a unified culture specifying a clear mission contributes directly to organizational effectiveness (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Rutter et al., 1979). This assertion is part of a larger debate about what causes school effectiveness and whether factors that can be said to create or contribute to that condition have been adequately identified (Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rowan, Bossert, & Dwyer, 1983).

For all this discussion of the causes, very little serious attention has been given to defining what effectiveness is. In organizational studies, there have been a number of serious efforts to define effectiveness (see Goodman, Pennings, and Associates, 1977). While there is still a great deal of confusion, it has become increasingly clear that effectiveness cannot be empirically or logically defined. One's definition depends upon one's values and beliefs about what is important (Scott, 1977). As a result, a wide range of criteria for effectiveness have been advocated. In education these include student achievement, student and staff happiness or satisfaction, and job placement among others. In business, the list includes productivity, efficiency, profit, market share, quality, growth, morale, control, adaptation, and stability. Empirical efforts to reconcile or weight these diverse criteria have been singularly unsuccessful (Mohr, 1982). These considerations suggest a very different relationship between culture and effectiveness. In effect, because effectiveness depends on one's values, it is actually defined by the local culture, at least for the specific school.

One result of this local definition of effectiveness is that it can vary substantially from school to school. This variation is illustrated by the three schools in this study. In Somerville, the prevailing definition focuses on the creation of good citizens by emphasizing order, respect for the individual, and preparation for the world of work. Two of these emphases have a short-term focus on the daily life of the school, on process. If students are quiet and where they belong and if their individual uniquenesses are respected and taken into account, then the school is judged to be effective by its members. The third criterion--preparation for the working world--suggests outcomes, the kinds of things that students should learn from their experience in the school. Implicit in this criterion is an assumption about this school's clientele: it is a working class population that will be employed but most will not go on to college or to higher status white-collar jobs.

Criteria of effectiveness at Westtown also emphasize process. The classroom should be the "capitol"--that is, instructional matters must take precedence over bureaucratic or political concerns. Order should be maintained in a fair, consistent manner, and the principal should protect teachers from outside interference. As long as these criteria are met, the teachers will view the school as effective. This definition of effectiveness gives each teacher considerable leeway to define the appropriate outcomes of schooling and does not require any agreement on what those outcomes should be. This definition is strongly held by teachers. However, district administrators hold a definition of effectiveness with an outcome dimension that stresses achievement as measured on standardized tests.

Disagreement about definitions of effectiveness is the hallmark of Monroe school. If there is any unity among teachers, it is in the belief that they should be allowed to specialize: an effective school is one that lets teachers determine their own criteria for instructional success. This belief allows teachers to hold a variety of conceptions of effective instruction without conflict. Teachers who hold the academic perspective stress the development of higher-order cognitive skills, the knowledge presented in the academic classes, and college placement. Vocational teachers stress the preparation of specific skills needed in the adult world. Those with the psychological development perspective emphasize adjustment to the adult world in terms of a positive self-concept and self-control. The harmony among these diverse definitions is disrupted by the superintendent who insists on imposing his own definition of effectiveness on all teachers. This definition, like that held by the Westtown administrators, stresses the demonstration through test scores of increased basic skills learning.

The variation in local definitions of effectiveness is bounded by the definitions arising from the larger society and the extent to which those societal definitions are experienced as binding. The acceptable agendas for American secondary education are quite broad, as seen the comprehensive ideal which allows for a wide range of instructional outcomes. Since Conant codified one form of that ideal in the 1950s, even more desired outcomes have been added to the list. If there is one commonality, it is a celebration of diversity. While this celebration reflects national ideals of democracy and equal opportunity, it also permits a moral neutrality where anything goes (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). One extreme of this tendency was seen in the proliferation of high school courses during the 1970s. While there has been some retrenchment from this extreme position in recent years, it is still difficult to know what is not permissible in the high school curriculum.

While the comprehensive ideal is permissive in general, there is the additional problem of using comparable definitions of effectiveness for schools with very different populations. The comprehensive ideal assumes a wide range of abilities or levels of achievement within each school. While this assumption fits many American schools, there has been a progressive specialization of clienteles for high schools in recent years (Abramowitz & Rosenfeld, 1978). Thus, most students in a working class school like Somerville have different instructional needs from those in either a poverty school like Monroe or a more affluent school like Westtown. Yet, society experts all three of these types of schools to reach towards the comprehensive ideal. The sort of specialized mission found at Somerville is in part a response to its specialized clientele, but this specialization does not rest easily with the comprehensive ideal. Definitions of effectiveness arising from the larger society do not allow schools serving students with a narrow range of demonstrated achievement to enact a definition of effectiveness which reflects those specialized needs. We still expect our high schools to do it all.

As an antidote to this permissiveness of the comprehensive ideal is a kind of moral leadership that we found in one of the case studies--Somerville. Mr. P exercised influence because he was able to pull together a number of threads in the Somerville context which communicated a strong message about what the high school, as a reflection of that context, should be. By taking a stand on value issues, he exerted a powerful *moral* leadership. In so doing, he shaped the culture of the school. From existing beliefs, values, artifacts, and symbols, he drew out a mission for the school that provided a definition of effectiveness that rang true. This definition was communicated forcefully and resonated with existing staff beliefs and community values. It was accepted and acted upon.

Among the three leaders, only Mr. P seemed to understand and act in congruence with this view of moral leadership. The principal in Westtown had no strong beliefs about what the school should be like and was easily swayed by the views of others. His instability was powerfully unsettling for the Westtown culture. The superintendent in Monroe did have a strong moral commitment to an end that seemed well suited for the majority of students in the high school--improvement in basic skills. However, artifacts used to communicate that commitment--the scans and QTPs--became symbols of oppression and administrative incomprehension rather than a rallying point for building a new mission for the school.

This view of the relationship between culture and effectiveness suggests a reinterpretation of what is important in the school effectiveness literature. As noted above, most attention has been given to identifying those factors that create effectiveness. At least equally important is the formal definition of effectiveness that has been adopted in this literature:

> Specifically, I require that an effective school bring the children of the poor to those minimal masteries of basic school skills that now describe minimally successful performance for the children of the middle class (Edmonds, 1979: 16).

This is a clear definition that takes a strong moral stand by specifying an instructional outcome--the minimal mastery of basic skills--for a specific clientele--the children of the poor. According to this definition, schools are effective when they break the well-documented association between family background and achievement (Parelius & Parelius, 1978) and help low SES students learn as much in the basic areas as their more wealthy peers.

The case studies suggest that this definition of effectiveness may not be appropriate for a good many schools. It is clearly not relevant for a school like Westtown where most students already score at or above national averages and minimum competencies are not an issue. It is perhaps more appropriate for a working class school like Somerville and even more relevant for a school like Monroe where a good many students experience substantial achievement deficits. However, the definition is not fruitful for all students at any high school even one like Monroe. This limitation is not surprising since the definition was developed from research on elementary schools. High schools, as defined by the comprehensive ideal, are too complex for such narrow definitions of effectiveness.

An alternative definition can be seen in the movement to increase academic standards that has been caused by recent critiques suggesting that achievement at the secondary level has declined because of lack of demand for academic rigor (e.g., National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1983). Legislatures have mandated stricter standards by requiring more courses in specific subject areas in order to graduate from high school. This demand runs up against the comprehensive ideal which suggests that the high school should be available to everyone, even including those special education students whose emotional or intellectual limitations keep them from benefiting from the traditional academic curriculum. Nevertheless, 43 states are considering or have recently passed legislation to tighten graduation standards (Education Week, 1985).

Such legislation can be viewed as a cultural expression of a new definition of effectiveness. However, like most symbols, the meaning of standards legislation is ambiguous; there are a great many ways to interpret it. A requirement for three years of mathematics instruction can be filled equally well by courses in calculus, algebra, business mathematics, or remedial arithmetic; and state law rarely specifies which is most appropriate. Moreover, since standards legislation can be implemented in many ways (Elmore, 1980), it creates a problem for each school. How is the new imperative to be reconciled with old beliefs and values? How is the existing definition of effectiveness challenged, modified, or amplified?

Should new, sharper definitions of effectiveness modeled on the effective schools research on high schools or new ideas about appropriate standards be developed for high schools, their adoption will require major cultural change. However, the case studies suggest that cultural change requires a long time perspective rather than a quick fix mentality; it achievement at the secondary level has declined because of lack of demand for academic rigor (e.g., National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1983). Legislatures have mandated stricter standards by requiring more courses in specific subject areas in order to graduate from high school. This demand runs up against the comprehensive ideal which suggests that the high school should be available to everyone, even including those special education students whose emotional or intellectual limitations keep them from benefiting from the traditional academic curriculum. Nevertheless, 43 states are considering or have recently passed legislation to tighten graduation standards (Education Week, 1985).

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Should new, sharper definitions of effectiveness modeled on the effective schools research on high schools or new ideas about appropriate standards be developed for high schools, their adoption will require major cultural change. However, the case studies suggest that cultural change requires a long time perspective rather than a quick fix mentality; it demands unflagging attention to details and a capacity to be reflective on the part of the change leaders; and it is encouraged by knowledge of and sensitivity to the deeply-held often unarticulated beliefs and values of the people whose everyday lives are played out in high schools.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH METHODS

A cultural perspective for the study of high schools suggests the need for research methods designed to explore participants' experiences and to view the organizational world as they do. To study cultures in this manner, an intensive field work approach was used. In addition, only three high schools were selected for case study. For all three high schools, one researcher spent at least thirty days in the site to gain indepth understanding of the cultural aspects of the school and how change processes interplayed with them. In one, a secondary fieldworker provided supplementary data collection. This approach provided sufficient time to get beneath the surface of the school's culture, to observe behavior, to become familiar to teachers, and to understand subtlety and nuance of meaning. It also provided the opportunity to explore the changes in the school's culture over time. The primary data collection techniques were indepth, open-ended interviewing and observing. To supplement these, a variety of documents were also collected at each school.

A major consideration of the study was the responses of the high school professionals to change processes. Fullan (1982) makes a convincing case for understanding the perspectives of various actors in the change process, and he regards teachers as the most important group of actors. He notes that educational change is multidimensional; involves change in beliefs, teaching approaches, or materials (p. 30); and can have profound effects on teachers' "occupational identity, their sense of competence, and their self concept" (p. 33). Merely being in a school where there are significant organization-wide change processes at work can be deeply disturbing.

Because change processes can touch deeply-held cultural beliefs, how teachers and other professionals interpreted events and behaviors was a major research interest. Data collection focused on their reactions to change and proposed change, attempting to understand how each school's professional culture affected change efforts and were affected by those efforts. These led directly to the conclusions presented in Chapter Five.

Research Approach

The research approach had two major features. First, it relied on one researcher per site, with the exception of Westtown. We had originally expected to use two researchers but found that other constraints precluded it. Reliance on one person allowed that researcher to know the high school in greater depth than if the allotted time had been shared, although the value of two researchers cannot be disputed. What we lost in terms of validity checks we gained in increased sensitivity (Patton, 1980). The second major feature of the design was the selection of only three high schools. With this small number, it was possible to move beyond the idiosyncracies of a single site and still capture the subtleties of cultural transformation. The rationale for intensive fieldwork, indepth knowledge by one researcher, and a limited number of sites was the same: each feature of the research approach encouraged detailed understanding of high school cultures and maximized the opportunities to understand the nuances of cultural transformation.

The primary data collection technique was indepth, open-ended interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). These often took place after classroom observations and had teachers reflect on their classroom behavior as well as their views on larger issues. Another focus was to discuss in detail cultural beliefs and change efforts. With schools undergoing change, events were so fresh in people's minds, that the reconstruction of the flow of events and people's reactions was relatively easy. We tried to trace the development of change efforts as perceived by the professional staff. We were particularly interested in their perspectives: how they viewed events, their responses to and interpretations of those events, and how they negotiated with the formal leaders, change champions, and among themselves to create an emergent change orientation. It was here that the concepts of conflict, dispute, and power were most useful.

The secondary data collection technique was observation. We observed teachers teaching and then talked with them to understand their actions. This approach has been used by Metz (1978) and McNeil (1981) to uncover significant cultural norms among teachers. We also observed department meetings, full faculty meetings, parent-teacher association meetings, and informal interactions in teachers' lounges, hallways, cafeterias, and department offices.

Through the interviews and observations, the research traced teachers' interpretations of change efforts and focused on the dynamics of those complex processes. In exploring teachers' perspectives, we identified some forces they saw as striving to maintain the established order and some pushing for change. In two high schools, deeply-held cultural beliefs were under dispute creating conflict, anger, and frustration. In the other, the content of the school's symbol system had undergone change. We documented these occurrences, identified their initiators, and traced the spread of commitment to or dispute about them.

Because the research interest was in professional cultures, teachers were the primary group. However, in one school, the leadership style of the principal was clearly the focal process, and we found administrtaors to be key actors in all three settings. We focused on these participants' beliefs about their craft, assumptions about children, interpretations of actions and words, and reactions to change processes. We anticipated and found variance within the teacher group. Salient subcultural groups were evident at each school. This was expected because though the study of cultures is the study of shared meanings, "the degree of 'sharedness' is, of course, variable and dependent upon the relative power of individuals and groups acting in a social field" (Goldberg, 1984:160). Metz (1978), for example, identified two broad categories of teachers based on their values and beliefs--their philosophies of teaching. In a different study, Metz (1982) once again found two salient teacher groups, but this time the distinction was based on reactions to and beliefs about school-wide change.

The remaining three parts of this appendix outline site selection procedures, specific data collection activities at each school, and a description of the data analysis processes.

Site Selection

The original research design called for the selection of two to four improving high schools for the project. For this selection process, we formulated a definition of an improving school, contacted informants and asked for nominations of improving schools, visited each school to ascertain if there was some evidence of improvement and if there was interest in participating in the study, selected a short list of schools, and negotiated final entry.

The definition of improvement was intentionally very broad in order to include a wide range of change processes. This definition included the following:

1. The school could be getting better in a number of areas including instruction, achievement, order and discipline, attendance, or climate.
2. The change might or might not involve a special improvement effort or the "adoption of an innovation" or new teaching approaches.
3. The school did not need to be exemplary, although exemplary schools were not precluded; what was crucial was some real evidence that things were getting better.

Although the schools could vary in a number of ways, we looked for evidence that:

1. The school had actually improved in whatever area school staff saw improvement for the last two or three years. It was not enough to be involved in programs; there had to be demonstrable results in a quantitative form.
2. The evidence of change had to include evidence that students were behaving differently or learning more.
3. The change had to be school-wide and not limited to a single department, grade level, or small group.

Special emphasis was placed on finding improving schools that were in urban settings. For cost reasons, it was also important to identify schools within driving distance of Philadelphia.

To obtain nominations, we contacted the following organizations:

1. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools: Commission on Secondary Schools
2. Bucks County Intermediate Unit (Pennsylvania)

3. Chester County Intermediate Unit (Pennsylvania)
4. Pennsylvania Elementary and Secondary Principals' Association
5. Philadelphia School District
6. Camden County Office of the New Jersey Department of Education
7. Gloucester County Office of the New Jersey Department of Education
8. Burlington County Office of the New Jersey Department of Education
9. Educational Information Resource Center (formerly EIC-South)

In each organization, we provided informants with background on purposes of the study and indicated that we would follow up with nominees to get further data. We asked for suggestions and descriptive information on the nominated schools. In addition to working through these nine agencies, personal contacts and the knowledge of other Research for Better Schools (RBS) staff were employed.

Through this process, fourteen high schools were identified. In each case, the principal or superintendent was telephoned. Thirteen agreed to discuss the study. In each meeting, the study's purposes, research activities, and feedback to the school were described, and questions were answered. In addition, we asked about the nature of improvements in the school and for evidence that student behavior or learning had changed in a positive direction. This evidence usually took the form of several years of records, including achievement test scores, SAT scores, minimum competency test scores, attendance data, and lateness rates, depending on the claim to improvement made by the principal.

The data were reviewed by RBS staff, and three schools were selected for inclusion in the study. The following table provides some demographic information on each one.

	Westtown	Monroe	Somerville
Grade Pattern	7 - 12	9 - 12	9 - 12
Enrollment	1,000	800	1,500
Percent Minority	05	95	45
District enrollment	2,000	4,000	213,000
City size	16,000	41,000	3,000,000
City Growth Pattern	decline	stable	stable

Westtown High School serves a white-collar suburban community that is becoming progressively more blue-collar. The community has an historical interest in maintaining a good high school that may now be declining somewhat. The district's leadership is stable; the same superintendent has served for a number of years. The high school has had a good reputation in the region for some time, especially as a school with a positive learning climate. However, in the early 1980s, declining SAT scores raised the possibility that the quality of the academic program was slipping. A new principal was hired in 1982 with a mandate to improve the academic program, and he took a number of steps to tighten the curriculum and emphasize academics. The history of composite SAT scores for the high school indicates that measured achievement improved over the last two years:

Year	Composite SAT Score
1978	918
1979	914
1980	933
1981	913
1982	879
1983	901
1984	916

RBS staff first visited Westtown High School in the spring of 1984. We met with the principal and department heads. The department heads expressed some concerns about the study, but these were worked out over the summer. Westtown High School agreed to participate in the study.

Monroe High School is the only high school in a small city with a declining industrial base. Achievement scores have been low throughout the district. About five years ago a new superintendent was hired who is committed to a forceful approach to school improvement. He has sought the assistance of Research for Better Schools, and one RBS program is providing training and assistance in the high school. In the last two years a new principal was hired to oversee improvement efforts in the high school. The success of those efforts is apparent in the following statistics.

Average Daily Attendance		Percent Passing State Minimum Competency Test		CAT Grade Point Equivalent			
		9th Grade		10th Grade		12th Grade	
Year	%	Communication	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
81	77	61	55	8.7	9.0	11.0	10.0
82	83	70	74	8.6	8.9	11.2	11.2
83	84	70	70	9.0	10.0	10.9	11.0
84	85	82	78	9.3	10.0	11.2	11.6

When we approached the superintendent early in the fall of 1984, he was very eager to participate in the study; administrative approval was quickly granted. However, it soon became apparent that there was considerable tension between the administration and a substantial portion of the high school teachers. It seemed likely that the study would meet with resistance strong enough to seriously impede data collection unless unusual steps were taken. For that reason, we approached the teachers' collective bargaining unit separately and asked for its approval of the study in hopes of alleviating this resentment. When that unit raised no serious objection to participation in the study, field work was initiated.

Somerville High School is located in a major urban metropolis in the mid-Atlantic region. It serves a blue-collar working class neighborhood and is very closely knit. Parents, uncles, aunts, and cousins of many students have graduated from Somerville, and community involvement in the school is high.

As one of eighteen comprehensive high schools in the city, Somerville responds to both district (city-wide) and sub-district (area) administrative structures. A new superintendent has recently implemented a standardized curriculum and strict eligibility and promotion requirements, while the state has enacted new high school graduation requirements.

Six years ago, a new principal came to Somerville and began to turn the school around. His first initiatives were broad, but focused on (1) discipline and attendance, and (2) building school spirit. The following data reveal how attendance and lateness has improved:

Year	% in attendance	% late
1980	78.3	5.8
1981	73.7	6.9
1982	77.8	4.8
1983	82.2	4.0
1984	85.4	3.8

RBS staff first visited Somerville in the summer of 1984 and met with the principal for initial discussions about the research. We returned on three separate occasions, once to meet with the acting principal, a second time to meet with the building committee, and a third time to present the study to the faculty as a whole. Although some questions were raised, Somerville agreed to participate. Fortunately, shortly after the onset of fieldwork, the principal returned from medical leave.

Data Collection Plan

The data collection activities reflected the uniqueness of the three different settings. In Westtown and Somerville, building trust with the participants went quite smoothly and easily, while at Monroe there remained some tension and suspicion throughout the study. Data collection at Monroe relied on more formalistic interviewing and scheduling of site visits. At both Westtown and Somerville, the researchers were welcome to come and go as they pleased. Table A.1 lists the number of days, interviews conducted, and hours of observation at each high school.

To guide data collection, we identified those events, settings, actors, and artifacts (Miles & Huberman, 1984) that had the greatest potential to yield good data on cultural beliefs. These provided parameters to guide data collection, whether we were observing or interviewing. First we focused on

Table A.1 Data Collection Activities at Westtown, Monroe, and Somerville

	site		
activity	Westtown	Monroe	Somerville
site visit days	57	30	40
interviews			
teachers/counselors/librarians	85 (92 possible)	57 (82 possible)	64 (84 possible)
administrators	4 (all possible)	5 (all possible)	4 (all possible)
support staff	0	5	3
district office	1	4	0
parents	0	0	8
observations			
total hours on site	200	130	195
number of classrooms	36	41	42
informal conversations	94	61	121
meetings			
department	0	1	5
full faculty	3	5	1
parent association	0	0	1
department chairpersons	9	1	0
other special committees	2	0	4
School Board	1	0	0
parent-teacher night	0	1	0

settings--a synonym for settings is places. During the first few weeks in the field, we collected data in the following settings:

- public places (main office, hallways, parking lot)
- teachers' lounge or lunchroom
- classrooms
- private offices:
  - counsellor's
  - disciplinarian's
  - vp for scheduling's
  - coaches
  - principal's
- department office or work room
- gymnasium of locker room
- auditorium
- meeting rooms

In each of these settings, certain events occurred that we wanted to observe and talk with people about. For example, in the disciplinarian's office there was the handling of routine infractions, suspensions, and expulsions; in the counselor's office were crisis interventions. Both types of events revealed beliefs about the school, the nature of the work, how people should relate to one another and treat students. In general, the events included:

- events where professionals interacted:
  - formal routines: faculty/department meetings, evaluations, union meetings
  - informal routines: lunch/coffee breaks/recess, morning arrivals
- events where professionals interacted with students:
  - teaching acts
  - extra curricular activities: sporting events, drama productions, music rehearsals
  - suspensions and expulsions
  - roster changes
  - crisis (e.g., drug use) counseling
  - assemblies and pep rallies

The first category of events provided major data on teachers' deeply-held beliefs about their work and the overall purposes of teaching in general and the school in particular. Faculty and department meetings were important and entailed observation primarily. As teachers discussed curriculum, testing, new state requirements, homework policies, and the more mundane aspects of high school life (announcements of schedule changes, field trips, time fillers), their beliefs about teaching and norms regarding how they should relate to one another in a meeting setting were evident.

Morning routines and other informal encounters also revealed these values and beliefs but in less structured ways. The brief encounters contained requests for help, plans for meeting, supportive gestures, queries about how a particular concept or skill was best taught -- events reflecting notions about work and ways professional should relate.

The second category -- events where professionals and students interact -- provided data about how adults and students are expected to relate to one another. Both in the classroom and outside, when teachers and students interacted, they revealed whether there was a sense of caring, of community, what their expectations were for one another regarding behavior and achievement, and what teachers felt was their overriding mission.

As data collection progressed, we tried to understand the perspectives of the following actors:

- administrators:
  - principal
  - vp for discipline
  - vp for curriculum
  - vp for schedule/roster
- counsellors
- coaches
- teachers:
  - department heads
  - different tenure in building
  - different departments
- students:
  - different ability levels
  - different visibility (i.e., participation in extra-curricular activities)

external actors:
- superintendents
- curriculum coordinators
- board members
- community members
- state education agencies

Finally, we observed and, where appropriate, collected certain artifacts that provided additional data. Included were the following:

documents:
- school newspapers
- policy statements
- attendance records
- disciplinary records
- achievement test scores

objects:
- logos
- mascots
- trophies
- decorations
- physical arrangements

The emphasis was on observation in the data collection activities because many facets of culture are implicit, subtle, and tacit. Our approach was to infer norms and values from behavior patterns and from conversations. Interviews helped us understand the settings and reconstruct the history of change efforts in each school. Interviewing was also be a necessary part of legitimizing our presence.

Table A.2 provides a sample day in the field which demonstrates how settings, events, and actors were covered. This schedule served as an initial guide to be sure we became known to key department heads and to regular teachers in each department. It also helped establish that observation--"hanging around"--would be a regular part of each day. As we moved along in Westtown and Somerville, observation became more important; later interviews were designed to test emerging hypotheses or to assess the distribution of adherence to particular beliefs and norms.

Table A.2 Sample Day in the Field

Period	Activity
1	observe disciplinarians' office--"getting into school" processes--lateness procedures, morning activities
2	interview disciplinarians
3	observe in teachers' lounge
4	interview department head
5	observe lunchroom activities
6	observe lunchroom activities
7	observe classroom
8	interview teacher
9	catch breath/write field notes

after school--observe sports, rehearsals--coaches and students

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing meaning to a mass of detailed information. It involves categorizing the data, interpreting them, and verifying that they do in fact meaningfully reflect the phenomenon chosen for study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984; Patton, 1980).

The original design of the study suggested five categories for organizing and coding the data. Upon analysis, however, these five concepts at once coalesced into two larger constructs--purpose and relationship--and separated into eight or ten more specific notions. Furthermore, although the original design underplayed media of cultural expression, at one site (Somerville) it became clear that managing cultural beliefs through a variety of mechanisms was a major facet of that school. Thus the means of cultural expression became the primary focus in that site. The specific categories and resulting coding schemes, then, reflected a balance between the original design and what each researcher was discovering in the high school.

Interpreting the data goes hand-in-hand with data collection and categorization. The interpretive act gives meaning to observed events and recorded words and begins with the original conceptualization of a study and ends with the final editing of the written report. However, to ensure that we were capturing participants' perspectives rather than merely our own, we shared emerging insights with one another (orally and in written form), with participants in the setting (in two high schools), and with two external scholars who provided us with feedback on the interpretations of each school.

The verification process has two aspects. First, during data collection, the researchers had to ensure an adequate sample of events, settings, and actors to be sure we had not sampled an idiosyncratic pocket of the universe. This we ensured by getting to know the departments (as formal structures), the informal social groups, and by allocating adequate time to the site (Patton, 1984). Second, as themes and hypothesis became evident in the data, we tested the ideas out (as described above) against each other, study participants, and outside experts. Moreover, in each setting, formal feedback has been provided. In two sites, copies of the case studies included in this report were shared with key individuals; in the third, a summary was provided. This process allowed participants to react, critique, and discuss the interpretations and conclusions made.

The processes of data analysis used in the study maximized understanding of the complexity of each individual high school. At the same time, because of a rich conceptual framework in the original design (Rossman, 1985), the research was guided by a common set of assumptions and concepts. These processes have encouraged the finely-textured descriptions developed in the case studies and prompted the set of propositions and theoretical statements developed in the concluding chapter. More tightly constrained analysis would have been the death knell of these ethnographic accounts of life in high schools.